

SERMONS

BY THE LATE

REV. JAMES RICHARD VERNON,

ASSISTANT PREACHER AT ST. PAUL, COVENT GARDEN, AND EVENING

LECTURER OF ST MARY-LE-BOW, CHEAPSIDE

And holier far the thoughts must be
Of things whose relics sleep
In silence 'neath the whelming sea,
Than such as sail the deep.

The flowers that rustle o'er the grave
When evening lowers around,
Tongues—language more persuasive have
Than any living sound.

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DEDICATION



TO THE

REV. F. RANDOLPH, D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. PAUL, COVENT GARDEN, &c. &c.

REVEREND SIR,

To whom can I dedicate, with greater propriety, this volume of Sermons, than to one, who in the early stage of my beloved brother's ministry, appointed him as fellow-labourer in that part of Christ's vineyard committed to his care?—in doing so, I trust that these few collected fruits of his labours will not be found unworthy of your acceptance.

To the Public, and especially to your own Parishioners, it is impossible that the knowledge of his having been united with you in the most important of all avocations, can fail of imparting a strong additional interest to the following Discourses, independent of any merits they may possess in themselves; and from the very favourable opinion you were pleased to express when my brother's manuscripts were submitted to your perusal, I have every reason to hope, that in thus fulfilling a duty which I felt to be due to his memory, I am also gratifying the wishes of those who were witnesses to his fidelity and affectionate zeal in preaching the glad tidings of salvation.

In thanking you for much friendly and judicious advice, I cannot conclude this brief dedicatory address without adding my own earnest wishes to those of all who have the pleasure of knowing you, that

your valuable life may be spared yet many years, for the good of your flock and the glory of the Master whom you serve, and that when the time of your pilgrimage on earth has expired, you may pass in peacefulness away, to enter into the joy which is promised to those who faithfully perform the work allotted to them.

I have the honour to be,

Réverend Sir,

With the highest respect,

Your obedient humble Servant,

WILLIAM VERNON

TO
THE PARISHIONERS

OF ST. PAUL, COVENT GARDEN

ALTHOUGH in the life of a retired minister of the Gospel, there can be little or nothing offered to interest the Public, yet, a few particulars, relative to the lamented Author of the following Sermons, may probably not be unacceptable to those who heard them delivered from the pulpit, --for whose welfare, in the truest sense of the word, he was, to the last moment of existence, deeply anxious, and of whose uniform kindness to him, he ever entertained the most lively feeling.

The Reverend J. R. Vernon decided, at a very early age, for the profession in which he took so much delight, and for the exercise of the duties of which, he was alone

desirous to live. He completed a full and liberal course of study at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, with the intention of becoming a minister of the Kirk of Scotland. Upon more mature consideration, however, a change took place in his views; and in the year 1817, he became fixed in his preference for the Established Church of England. His acquirements and capacity for discharging the important duties of the sacred office to which he aspired, rendered the attainment of the object in which he was so deeply interested, a matter of comparatively slight difficulty. Accordingly, after entering his name at Queen's College Cambridge, he was ordained, and commenced his ministry, as curate of Earl Stopham, Suffolk. At the end of nine months, Mr. Vernon came to London, and was engaged as assistant preacher, by the late Rev. John Owen, at Park Chapel, Chelsea, where he remained about a twelvemonth. Circumstances then occurring, which rendered his continuance there unnecessary, Mr. Owen kindly introduced him to the Rev. Dr. Randolph, the much-respected rector of St. Paul, Covent

Garden ; and towards the close of the year 1819, he was appointed to assist him, in the morning services of that church.—Cheered by the hope that his labours were not in vain, he continued active in the diligent and faithful performance of his duties, till early in the spring of 1823. At that period, which was very shortly after he had been chosen Sunday evening lecturer of St. Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside, decided symptoms of a pulmonary complaint, compelled him to relinquish his public ministrations, for the purpose of adopting the necessary means of restoring his health. All attempts, however, to promote this most desirable object were fruitless; and medical skill unavailing; it pleased the Almighty and all-wise disposer of events, that his “sun should go down at noon,” and he expired on the 12th of January, 1824, at Stonham Parva, the parish adjoining that in which he first commenced the duties of his sacred office. His end was peaceful and happy ; and resigning himself with perfect confidence, during the whole of his indisposition, into the hands of his Father and his God, he was enabled, when

the hour of his departure arrived, to leave the most unequivocal testimony, that to him "to die was gain."

The Editor cannot permit himself to believe that there are any into whose hands this work may fall, who will think an apology necessary, for adding *one* more to the many volumes of excellent discourses already before the Public. The publication of the present small collection has been undertaken in consequence of the kind wishes expressed by many of the Author's most valued friends; and the profits, (should any result from the sale,) will be devoted to the funds of the Charity Schools of St. Paul, Covent Garden.

Some apology may however be necessary for the manner in which the Editor has endeavoured to discharge a duty, which has been "mournful indeed, but pleasant to the soul." With the aid of some friends, in whose judgment he has much more confidence than in his own, and whose kind assistance he takes this opportunity of acknowledging, he has se-

lected the following Sermons from numerous other manuscripts, many of which might perhaps be considered of equal merit with those now offered to the Public;—and if, to the fastidious eye of criticism, there should appear to mingle with the wreath thus twined to cast on the tomb of a beloved brother, any unseemly weed, let it be remembered that the contents of this volume were not written with a view to publication; and therefore, should any just reason for disapproval appear, no blame under such circumstances, can attach to the memory of the departed.

20, *Leicester Square,*

June 4, 1821.

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SERMON I.

THE NECESSITY AND HAPPY RESULTS OF THE
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LUKE i. 78, 79.

*The day-spring From on high hath visited us, to give
light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow
of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

HOW mournful, yet how just, the images here employed to give an idea of the state of the world, when God interposed with the last best gift of his love for its relief! Error, darkness, and death, reigned with almost universal sway over Jew and Gentile; the light of nature had set in the gloom of nature's depravity,—the rays of Divine illumination, which had been shed over the land of Israel, had failed to pierce the night in which men loved to dwell. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." The shadows of death had settled upon the creation of God,—with true

religion, peace, and happiness, and hope, had abandoned the world. Are there any colours dark enough, in which to exhibit the wretchedness and corruptions of the Heathen world, in its best days, and under its most advantageous circumstances?—For, without suffering the mind to dwell upon the abominations and cruelties of the nations sunk in utter ignorance and barbarism, let us look back on the seats of its most civilized and polished people, on the abodes where flourished the empire of taste, learning, and philosophy. Shall we not find, that in those chosen regions, with whatever lustre the sun of science poured forth its rays, the moral darkness was so thick *that it might be felt*?—that even the learned and refined, the decent and the moral characters of those days, were such as we now turn away from with shame and disgust? Idolatry, superstition, or atheism,—want of natural affection,—brutal excess,—unfeeling oppression, and savage cruelty, reigned, ravaged, and degraded, where the sciences flourished, and the arts attained their perfection. There was darkness in the spiritual horizon, and it mattered not that the sun shone brightly in the natural firmament, and knowledge gave forth her light. “Men chose not to retain God in their knowledge,” and in just judgment, “He gave them over” to all the horrors and dark-

ness of "a reprobate mind." From the shades of the Academy, let us turn to the sacred mountains of Judea, and we behold on Calvary, the death of the holiest and most beneficent Being that ever wore our form, inflicted by the arm of persecution, and embittered by the scoffs of those who had witnessed his most blameless life, and his deeds of charity and benevolence. How darkened must their minds have been, who discerned not the majesty of the Godhead, and the beauties of holiness, and the love of the Saviour, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth!

There is as dark and disheartening a scene as the world then afforded, exhibited even in the days of light and religion, by the natural state of the soul of man,—a state, in which continue the souls of many, till the shades of the utter darkness gather around them. Speaking of the world in general, it is, in a moral sense, wondrously improved, since the star which arose in the east, shed its mild and lovely light over the earth. The character of man has been greatly changed for the better, and thousands who care not for the blessed Saviour and his religion, are, in numberless ways, reaping the benefits of his mission. "The day-spring from on high" shines, as the fruitful showers fall, on many who are "evil and unthankful,"—and they, and the scenes

around them are cheered, beautified, and comforted by the light. But the darkness which has been so generally dissipated from the face of society, still lurks in many a human breast, and the shades are only discovered to be more thick, and more malignant, by their remaining impervious to the light which has descended from above on the world. It is a truth which ought to be ever present to our minds, that their natural state is one of spiritual darkness; and it becomes us, while we are aware of the blessings which Christianity has conferred on our earth, to inquire *if we individually have participated in the benefit?*—if the light of the knowledge of God our Saviour have shone on our souls, dispersed the dark shadows which hang over our understandings, and melted the hardness of our hearts? For remember, it matters not, as it respects each of us, that the Gospel day has dawned—it matters not, that in our happy land, the Sun of Righteousness blazes in the meridian,—it matters not, though he shone with noon-day splendour over the whole earth,—enlightened, renovated, and cheered every bosom,—all this can be of no avail to us, if he shine not in *our* hearts. If the healing of his beams be not applied by the blessing from on high, as medicine to *our* souls,—if the brightness of his rays dissipate not the ignorance of *our*

minds,—the only effect of the “day-spring” having arisen, which *we* shall experience, will be the guilt and condemnation that the light was imparted, and we hid our faces from it,—the day dawned, and we fled from its rising to the shades of night.

Let us notice some of the *effects* which arise in the conduct of men, from that state of darkness which is natural to us, as the descendants of him, by whose sad fall were extinguished the light of our hope, the glories of our original constitution. And while we notice them, let us not fail to ascertain by their forming, or not, prominent features of our character, whether our souls are buried in their native gloom, or have been illumined by the light, designed to guide into the ways of truth and happiness, “every man that cometh into the world.”

To what principle, then, can it be owing, that beings, sent into the world by him who created them for his glory, and *to work out their own salvation*, act as if each lived but for himself,—as if living here a few years, and then dying, were all their history, summed up their whole existence? How shall we account for the fact, that thousands live in this our land, on every part and circumstance of which, God, and the Redeemer, and eternity, are inscribed in characters so plain, that *he who*

runs may read them, “without God in the world,” direct all their study to *this* scene, where they have no continuing abode, and forget the land to which they are journeying, wherein they are to abide for ever,—employ their whole time in the acquisition of the gold that becomes *dim*, the wealth which *moth and rust can corrupt*, and human violence invade, and from which death must soon separate them, when they are perpetually exhorted by mercy and wisdom to lay up better treasures, in a treasure-house that is eternal? Whence comes it, that while their fellow-men are every day dying around them,—that while age, infirmities, and disease, are shaking *the earthly houses of their tabernacles*, they seem to “think all men mortal but themselves,” and learn no lesson from the graves that surround them? It is the want of spiritual discernment that makes them blind to duty, interest, and safety; for how else should *a judgment to come* be viewed as it is, without exciting in them any disposition to arm themselves against its terrors,—how else should the grand alternatives, eternal blessedness or woe, be contemplated without anxiety,—the Saviour of sinners, without the most lively gratitude and faith,—the day of merciful visitation without any due estimate of its unspeakable importance? Wisdom gives forth her counsels, and

the many disregard her,—Heaven denounces its threatenings, and no salutary fears are excited,—offers its glories, and the hands of those who are ready to grasp at all else, are not stretched forth for these,—mercy pleads, and misery will not hearken. How glaring are the inconsistencies we every where behold, in a world calling itself Christian,—professing the belief of truths, which, if the mind were fully aware of their awful meaning, would take sleep from many an eye, and slumber from many an eyelid, till belief were reduced to practice, and the voice of truth became prophetic of blessedness! Do we want yet further proof that the darkness indicated by our text, still sits thickly upon the minds of men? Behold the multitudes who satisfy themselves with the *form*, while they are destitute of the *power* of godliness,—quiet themselves with mistaken notions of the mercy of God, and the efficacy of an atonement, which they suppose is to save them from the *consequences*, while they are permitted to indulge in the *practice* of sin. Mark the low standard of morals, and most commonly of religion, which men set up for themselves,—how lightly they think of misdeeds, for which the God of justice is preparing a most tremendous doom,—how readily they expose themselves to temptation, and how easily yield to its allurements,—how well prepared the enemy of

souls finds them for his coadjutors in the work of rebellion against heaven,—how much more congenial to the desires and the feelings, are the ways of sin, than the paths of religion and virtue. These are familiar facts, which every man may observe for himself, and, in some measure, in himself. The conduct of mankind is a comment, too full and too clear, upon the statements of Holy Writ. How well does it illustrate the melancholy outlines of human blindness and misery, sketched in our text, which represents the irreligious as dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death, and wandering far from the ways of pleasantness and peace!

And is not this a most deplorable state, to be blind to the interests of eternity? The compassionate mourn over those whose conduct proves them insensible to their temporal advantage; but where can be found sorrow deep enough to bewail their misery, who are blind to interests which no human conception can appreciate,—the interest of the soul, for which a world would be but a poor exchange? —who are wandering heedless and unthinking in the “valley of the shadow of death,” cheated by the brilliance which the arch-deceiver throws over the scene,—but still on the verge of the grave of their immortal hopes,—who, by their guilt and impenitence, and irreligion, have made

God their enemy, and consequently know no peace, but the false security of those who shut their eyes to the danger that lies in their path? Is there not enough of terror, of utter wretchedness, in such a situation, to excite us to alarm and anxious inquiry, lest it be ours,—to avail ourselves of the light which is shining around us, which can illumine the darkest recesses of the soul,—the light which came from above, and must be sought of him that sent it,—which alone can guide our feet to its home and its fountain? There is no darkness so thick as not to pass away before it,—no shades of ignorance so gross, that it cannot scatter them. By shining on our earth, it dissipated much of the gloom which hung over it,—it will transform our souls into abodes of purity and life, and peace; and one of its first happy effects is, a discovery of the darkness which is natural to man. This is a great point gained,—the consciousness of our ignorance of God, our mistaken pursuits, our danger, our wants; for it is difficult to persuade the pride of the human understanding that it is in a state of darkness, as to the matters most important to be known, and the self-conceit of human sufficiency, that it is, as to its true happiness, “in need of all things.”

The first beam, then, of “the day-spring from on high,” which visits the sinner, dis-

covers to him *the darkness of his understanding, in the things that concern his peace,—the gloominess of his prospects,—the shades of spiritual death which are hovering around him,—his want of the only genuine peace, peace with God.*

And mark the change which speedily takes place in his feelings, views, and habits,—a change similar to that which occurs in the appearance and circumstances of the earth, when the morning succeeds to the darkness of the night. The world assumes a different aspect to those on whom *the Sun of Righteousness* has risen, for his beams reveal all its vanity, all its perishableness, all its impurity and worthlessness.

In a state of darkness men think little of the grave. The day-spring of God's grace and spiritual illumination, shines strongly upon the narrow house, and the eye, thus enlightened, cannot lose sight of this termination to man's pilgrimage; and they, who behold the world and the tombs that await them, in one view, are in little danger of setting their hearts on those objects which must soon become to them of no avail.

This heavenly light shines also upon *the Scriptures*, and they cease to be as a soiled book,—cease to be uninteresting,—to be viewed as little better than a chronicle of *canonically devised fables*. All their wondrous truths,

all their majesty of inspiration, all their topics of deepest interest, beneath this sacred light, rise into distinctness, beauty and grandeur. We become familiar with our wants,—with the shortness of our time,—with the mysterious realities of eternity,—with the abodes of bliss and of woe,—the approaching day of account,—*the thrones set, and the books opened; the dead, small and great, standing before God.* The Divine character rises before us in its perfection and glory: “we abhor *ourselves* and repent in dust and ashes.” And the amazing plan of redemption is exhibited to our view in power and mercy,—in the splendours of the Deity,—in the humiliation of the Man of sorrows. Sin marshals itself before us, in all the multitude of those acts of rebellion which form the guilt of man, in all the enormity of each act of the vast sum; the justice of God appears to us in all its strictness and unyielding rectitude, when, by the light of heaven we behold the manger and the wilderness, the cross and the tomb, and associate with them, Him who was born and tempted, and mocked and crucified, that mercy might have her course in man’s redemption.

The “day-spring” from on high is also, to those whom it visits, *a light of guidance and of comfort*, as well as of knowledge. When tempted to sin, it enables us to see who lays the bait,

and *surely in vain will the net be spread in the sight of any bird.* If we are afflicted, it enables us to see clearly how “sweet are the uses of adversity;” to behold in our suffering, the love of our Father, that our griefs will be but momentary, the succeeding joys eternal; and when the Christian is about to “finish his course, having kept the faith,” how clearly, in the light of spiritual perception, does the last enemy appear a vanquished tyrant, without a dart, and without a sting! There is no gloom hanging over the grave, and the eye of faith brightens, and the prospect becomes unspeakably glorious and cheering, as the view extends to the promised land which lies beyond the desert of his pilgrimage. Finding him in the ways of peace, death, far from affrighting and harming him, places his peace and his happiness infinitely beyond the power of interruption.

How blessed the light which exhibits such glories, such wonders, such blessings to our view; which shews us ourselves, our dangers, our misery, that we may be transformed into a better image, exchange death for life, gain, and blessedness, and glory, for disgrace and woe! Let us seek this illumination, nor be alarmed at the dreariness, the horrors and guilt, it will first present to our view. Our prospects will soon improve; will assume the

greyness of the early morning, and then burst into the full splendours of noon. Like the wise men from the East, let us hail the light, and mark the leadings of the star which will guide us to Bethlehem: let us present to him we shall find there, not gifts, for we have none to offer, but ourselves, to be endowed by the Giver of every good and perfect gift, with the gold that loseth not its lustre, and the merits of his righteousness and atonement, more precious than frankincense or myrrh. Let us follow it to Nazareth and to Jerusalem, to where it set over Calvary and the sepulchre, to arise in more dazzling brightness on the third day. Let us take it for the guide of our lives, the object of our course, the light of our understandings,—the star of our hope; it will keep our look upwards, our minds and views clear, our path unclouded,—its last and best rays in this state of sojourning will gild our beds of death.

And let those who have not yet discerned it, whose eyes are bent downwards, and their souls in darkness, remember that a morning is hastening, when they too shall behold it, rising on the assembled millions of the human race, awaking the slumberers in every tomb, and discovering the secrets of every heart;—when they who have walked in its light, shall be received to dwell in the brightness

of its glory for evermore,—and they, who have then for the first time beheld it, shall in vain endeavour to elude the rays which shine upon their lives of folly, guilt and impenitence. How will they consume beneath the fierceness of that light, and call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from its glare, and seek almost as a refuge, the abodes of darkness, into which they must sink for ever and ever !

May it be *our* immediate concern then, that the “day-spring” arise upon us all, in time to guide us on our pilgrimage here, and cheer our souls, ere we lie down in the dust,—and that the morning of that never-ending day, which shall be ushered in by the Archangel’s trumpet, may summon us to dwell for ever in the light of our Father’s and our Saviour’s countenance !

SERMON II.

THE DOCTRINES AND PREDICTIONS OF THE
SAVIOUR, INFALLIBLE.

MARK xiii. 31.

*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall
not pass away.*

BY the *words* of our blessed Lord, we may understand in general, the doctrines of that religion which he came from heaven to teach mankind:—all that, *at sundry times, and in divers manners, God spake unto the fathers by the prophets*, explained and fulfilled by His incarnate Son. The corruption of man's nature,—his incapacity to render perfect obedience to the law of heaven,—his consequent exposure to the penalty of transgression—the substitution of the Saviour to endure the divine vengeance, which man had merited,—the offer of the aids of the Holy Spirit to lead him to avail himself of the proffered remedy, and open his way to heaven and happiness;—these leading

facts and discoveries of our most holy faith, we may consider as receiving in the text, a remarkable testimony from the Son of God, as to their truth and immutability.

With these doctrines our Christian education makes us acquainted,—it is therefore unnecessary, at present, to enter into their nature. But, from the Divine declaration before us, we may profitably take occasion to impress our minds with the feeling that our religion is most incontrovertibly true, and that all those deeply interesting details, which it unfolds, respecting our duty here, and our destinies hereafter, demand our most serious attention, our most earnest prayers, and the application of all our efforts.

May He, who alone can inspire us with divine truth, and heavenly wisdom, afford us his aid, and benediction !

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Our Lord had been predicting to his disciples, the destruction of Jerusalem, and designed to shadow forth, to them and us, in that terrible event, the dissolution of the world, and the final judgment of mankind. The disciples had seen much of the divine power of their Master ; but their imperfect views, and unestablished faith, their Lord well knew, might be confused and shaken by the wondrous occurrences he was

describing to them, as future. Hence the strong assertion, now the theme of our reflections—an assertion, which, coming from his lips, could not fail to impress their hearts. Perhaps, through the suggestions of the enemy of our souls, or on account of the weakness of our faith, we may sometimes be tempted to doubt the accomplishment of the wondrous prediction, that all the race of man, from the first human being, to his latest descendant,—those who shall have mingled with their kindred dust, or been scattered to the winds of heaven, and they who shall be *alive and remain*, when all things are consummated, are, on one most solemn day, to meet at the bar of God, and receive the assignment of their eternal portions. It need not be asked, if these wondrous events are more astonishing, more hard of belief, than the creation of all that now exists, out of nothing; we can bring forward proofs of their certain futurity, from considerations that bear more directly on the point. Let us then, attend, for a short time, to some of those predictions of our Lord, which have already been accomplished, or are now in the train of fulfilment. The chapter from which our text is selected, naturally leads us to consider the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, its celebrated temple, and government, by the Romans.

Jesus and his disciples were departing from the splendid edifice of Jewish worship, when one of the latter said to his Master, "See what manner of stones and buildings are here," — behold the grandeur and beauty of the structure! — Is not this a fit habitation for the God of Jacob; — shall not His worship continue to be celebrated here, for all generations! — No — said, our Lord — *Seest thou these great buildings? — there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down; and, this generation shall not pass, till this prediction, be accomplished.* Accordingly, that generation did *not* pass, till this event, the overthrow of the city, and state and temple of Jerusalem, was most strikingly and awfully accomplished. Forty years had not elapsed, ere *the abomination of desolation*, spoken of by a former prophet, and now predicted by Him that sent him, took its station in the sanctuary of God, and the standards of heathen Rome waved on the ruined towers of Zion; — when the foundations of the temple were razed and the plough made to pass over them, in token of an utter and long-enduring destruction. This event, resting on the most indubitable historical evidence, was, forty years before its accomplishment, foretold in explicit terms, by the founder of our religion: — furnishing at once a striking proof of His divinity, and the unimpeachable

truth of all his words. And how powerfully corroborative of the general truth of Christianity, is the present state of the Jewish people! How much of confirmation, do their present dispersion, degradation and separate existence, furnish to the assertion of our text. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away!*

Other predictions of our Saviour would be most worthy of attention. There is one, however, which He published through His Spirit, by His apostles, which has received, and is receiving a most evident accomplishment;—I mean that, respecting the rise, progress, decay and final downfall of the Papal, and other anti-christian powers. To those, at all acquainted with historical details, and the present circumstances of the world, it would be needless to demonstrate how this prediction, and others akin to it, are advancing towards fulfilment,—how the pure and undefiled faith, is every day vindicating its claims, and asserting its divinity,—how the reign of superstition and false religion, is tottering to its fall,—how the empire of darkness is compelled to recede from its old boundaries,—how heathenism is yielding its converts to the truth, and, as we firmly trust, the happy period is approaching, when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the*

kingdoms of our God and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

The assertion of our Lord, towards the close of his ministry, that after being put to death by the arm of persecution, he would rise, on the third day, from the grave, was, to the human apprehension of his disciples, and is, to our's, one of the most remarkable of his predictions; and is, at the same time, one, that most incontestibly met its fulfilment. That He, who seemed to fall the helpless prey of his enemies,—who, like the generations of man before him, sunk into the sleep of death, and became the tenant of the grave, should, in spite of the precautions of the jealous priesthood, the arms of the Roman soldiery, and the bars of the Tomb which well secures its prisoners, rise again to the activity and functions of life, as it was an event, though predicted, little expected, even by the friends of our Lord, to meet its accomplishment, so did it fill the minds of its astonished witnesses with amazement. We, after the examination of ages, receive as having really happened, this miraculous occurrence,—it is the ground of our faith,—it is the foundation of our hopes, and how greatly does this event illustrate and confirm the assertion, *Heaven and earth shall pass away*,—the laws of nature shall fail. and its frame suffer disso-

lution, but *my words shall not pass away*. Does not then, the conclusion most legitimately follow, that if the predictions of our Saviour, which we have noticed, failed not of their accomplishment in the way and at the time foretold, none of those which remain unfulfilled shall, in any measure, come short of a most exact verification. And with respect to the grandest and most wonderful of all those that are yet to come to pass, the settling of the final destinies of mankind after the general resurrection; shall the clamours of infidelity, shall the suggestions of tempting fiends, shall the doubts of a wavering faith, lead us, for a moment, to entertain the fatal and most unfounded supposition, that the dead shall not be raised;—that men shall not be judged *according to their deeds done in the body*,—that the abodes of bliss shall not receive their delighted inhabitants, nor the regions of despair their miserable victims? Remember who it is, on whose will, on whose might, all things depend,—who, and what that Being was, who declared that none of his words should fail—*ever*. He, who, at the first, *said, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast,—who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. Who, all-wise, and most holy, can do nothing contrary to the perfection of his nature, and Almighty, can accomplish all that he has predicted.—*Mountains may depart, and*

hills may be removed,—the most durable objects in nature may crumble into dust,—but his words shall not fail,—his purposes shall not fall to the ground. Man may devise and not be able to carry into effect,—weakness, or ignorance may compel him to relinquish his most favorite designs,—but He, who is the great God, cannot suffer disappointment in his purposes, or defeat in his undertakings. Where is the power that may contend with *him, who doth what pleaseth him in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth?* Can man alone, or aided by the rebel spirits of darkness, impede the execution of the purposes of omnipotence?—as well might the most impotent of our race, extend his puny arm, and elevate his feeble voice, thinking to command the thunder of heaven into silence, or the raging ocean into stillness,—as well might we think of attempting, whatever of impossibility fancy can conceive, as for a moment dream, that a posthumous repentance, that the most urgent intreaties, made too late,—or the despairing rage and frenzied violence of myriads of condemned rebels, can arrest the operations of that Being who will not repent, and cannot be resisted.

Heaven and earth shall pass away—these stable, and seemingly perpetual laws which regulate the mechanism of the present system of things

—these shall indeed cease to operate. The sun which now shines upon us, shall be eclipsed for ever;— the moon in her beauty, the stars in their brilliance, shall cease to shed their influences,—shall cease to be the wonder of the philosopher, and the theme of the poet, —the hills which seemed to sustain the heavens, and which sacred writ has, by comparison, styled, *everlasting*, shall flow down like melted wax, at the decree of Him, who laid then foundations so deep, and raised their heads so high;—those immense tracts of country, the scenes of fertility, and the abodes of civilized men, and the wastes of the children of the desert,—the sea with its islands, and the tributary streams which feed the mighty deep, shall again become *without form and void*,— while the words of Him that *was despised and rejected of men*, shall, not one of them “fall to the ground;” and the truths which he preached to an unbelieving world, shall survive the ruin. He, who destroyed the old world with a flood, and overwhelmed with fire the *cities of the plain*, shall, when his designs are fulfilled, overwhelm the present, with an utter destruction, while the doctrines of our faith, shall, like Noah and Lot emerge unharmed from the universal desolation: safe in the ark of God, borne up, amid the devastation, by their Author, the *Angel of the Covenant*, they shall endure, to the

comfort of the faithful, and the confusion of the scorner, till He “with whom is no variable-ness, nor shadow of turning,” shall fail in his love,—till He, who is from *everlasting to everlasting*, shall cease to be,—and the throne which is built upon Eternity, shall shake and fall.

It is not so much the object, in what has been thus advanced to combat the objections of the infidel, as to call the attention of the professing Christian to the momentous truths in which his immortal interests are so deeply involved. In this enlightened age, it would be an insult to our understandings, and a libel upon our hearts, to attempt to go back to the rudiments of our faith, and advance the evidence upon which, it is believed that the Son of God visited our earth, and taught, and died, and rose again ;—to go over the ground, upon which we rest assured, that the prophets were not madmen, nor the apostles liars,—that our martyrs bled not for a tale of imposture, and that they, who have fallen *asleep in Jesus*, shall not sleep for ever. This is not deemed requisite ;—but it is at all times most necessary to call back our wandering minds from the things that are perishing, to those which shall endure for ever. We are so apt to forget the importance of the doctrines of inspiration, their application to ourselves, while we hesitate not to

admit their truth, that the minister of Religion, can never more consistently with his duty, exercise his vocation, than in reminding himself and others, that *Heaven and earth shall pass away*, while the revealed truths of those Bibles we so much neglect, *shall not pass away*. We admit that all our eyes now behold, shall return to their primitive nothing; but do we sufficiently bear in mind, that though this shall be the case, our souls shall endure for ever, and bear eternal testimony, either in the regions of bliss, or of misery, to the truths of the gospel?

Let us look then, at the scenes in which we are to bear a part;—and if we feel alarmed at the consideration that none of those things declared in holy writ, respecting the destinies of our race, shall fail of fulfilment, the alarm will be salutary, if it compel us to flee for refuge to *the only hope set before us*. We should contemplate ourselves as the candidates for celestial happiness, or the victims of endless misery. We should think of the assembling of the generations of our race, around the throne of the Judge,—the world in its last flames around us,—the spheres of heaven falling from their places,—the pit yawning for its prey,—the gates of the eternal city thrown open for those who have done well,—the appointed angels separating between the righteous and

the wicked, and these at the sentence of the Judge, about to enter upon never-ending happiness, and those, into everlasting woe.—Do we really credit that all these things shall come to pass, and can we remain indifferent about them?—shall we not anxiously seek to ascertain what sentence is likely to be pronounced upon us,—shall we not, with beating hearts, consider what abode shall be assigned as *our* eternal dwelling?

Let us not fail then, in conclusion, to draw, from the subject before us, matter of consolation to those who are attending to *the things which concern their peace*—of encouragement, of firm faith, and joyful hope,—to those, with whom, religion has been a subject of little interest, or care, matter of exhortation and warning. We, who have availed ourselves of the merits of the Saviour, and thus secured peace with God, may rest secure, that all shall be well with us, in every present and future exigency;—that we shall not miss the crown which awaits us, nor fail of the rest for which we are longing. The storm of adversity, passing over, and withering our temporal prospects, overturning the foundations of earthly happiness, shall not blight our best hopes,—cannot shake the grounds of our confidence. These shall survive the convulsion, in which heaven and earth shall perish. We have been following no

cunningly devised fables,—listening to no tale of fancy, when we opened our ears to the words of our blessed Lord. Having accepted the offers of infinite mercy,—been guided by the counsels of unerring wisdom, aided by Divine grace,—ransomed by the Saviour's blood, our blessedness, our reward, are sure.

May God grant that those who have been inattentive to the momentous truths of Revelation, — who seem to forget that they have souls—and that eternity gives to those souls, an inconceivable value, awakened from the dream of insensibility, revolve in their minds, the awful consideration, that, as the promises of God shall not fail, neither shall his threats of vengeance on the finally impenitent, come short of their full execution. *Heaven and earth shall pass away*,—but his determination, that the violators of his law, the despisers of his mercy, shall not escape with impunity, will not be shaken nor changed. Let those, whose doings and consciences rank them in this class of the unhappy objects of the Divine displeasure, seek the aids of the Spirit of God, to impress upon their minds the truths of religion, by a reception and use of which, they may escape the *wrath to come*.

We shall all do well, continually to bear in our minds, the certainty that the solemn day must arrive, in which we shall be summoned

to give in our account, and receive our final rewards. Our Lord had been speaking of this, in the part of his discourse which precedes the words we have been considering. Immediately after these words, we find the appropriate exhortation which closes the chapter,—let us never forget it : “Of that day and that hour,” (says Christ,) “knoweth no man. Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning ; lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

SERMON III.

THE INSEPARABLE UNION OF THE BELIEVER
TO GOD.

ROMANS viii. 38, 39.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

HUMAN attachments are just as uncertain and unstable as are all things in which man is the sole agent. In spite of all the fictions ever framed of all the realities that might be adduced from the experience of actual life, eternal, inseparable friendship and love have no meaning and can have none, when the terms are used in reference to any connexion that can subsist among creatures of a day. It is not alone on the empires and systems, on the pyramids and the palaces, on the solid foun-

dations of the terrestrial abode of our race, that the curse of changeableness has been pronounced; the best feelings of the heart,—the tenderest ties,—the most wisely and happily assorted unions, are perpetually blighted by the breath of estrangement, severed by accident or necessity; as the former have passed, are passing, will ultimately and for ever pass away beneath the touch of time, who can use, with regard to any earthly attachment, the words of the Apostle, *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can sever and destroy them?*—Take Death in his aspect and bearing on human friendships;—he has parted, and is continually parting those whom “height and depth; principalities and powers” could never have separated. With regard to those whom he has taken from us, we may cherish fond remembrances,—their idea is, to us, as that of a pleasant day which has gone by, which we call to mind with a sweet recollection of its joys and its brightness,—a recollection, mingled with sorrow that it can never return:—but we have no communion with them,—we are tenants of different spheres, our pursuits and interests are as different as the grave can make them;—as here we knew them, we shall know them no more for ever:—

our feelings towards them are of a high and holy, not of a confidential and earthly nature:—were they to burst on our view, borne on the wings of seraphim, we should either sink in terror, or fall down in adoration. Our former intercourse could not be renewed. —Thus doth the King of Shadows separate the sworn friends, who in life “took sweet counsel together, and together went to the house of God.”

But who needs to be informed that much less than death will often burst the choicest bands of human intercourse, and quench for ever the brightest and purest flame that was ever kindled on the altar of earthly love? Little does he know of the human heart, who can confidently predict even a temporal durability to the friendships of man. The term of a brief existence is often too long for vows which boldly summoned eternity to witness their fulfilment: it requires not, that angels should take wing to dissolve them, — that “principalities and powers” should put forth their authority and might;—let but one friend rise high in prosperity, or another sink low in adverse fortune,—nay, let but a harsh word pass, a slight surmise be entertained,—let the frailest and most trivial thing in nature intervene,—and adieu to the love which promised to survive the tomb, and to the union of hearts

which was to subsist after those hearts were mouldered to dust!

It was necessary to take this view of the attachments and friendships of earth, in connexion with the text, in order that we might arrive with a full appreciation to contemplate the love of which it treats: and if there be an idea, more adapted than any other to loosen our hold on things temporal, - to make heaven the scene, and God the object of our fondest affections and best hopes, it is this, that He is the only Being who most disinterestedly loves, and will unceasingly love ~~us~~ — that, the only place where our love of God and man will be made perfect, will become unchangeable.

In pursuance of this idea, let us consider, in the first place, THE WONDROUS TESTIMONIALS OF GOD'S LOVE TO MAN.

We cannot look back to the first displays of the love of the Creator to our race, without a sigh over the memory of departed glory and felicity: we know not what it was to bear the manifest and embodied image of Divinity, — to dwell in Paradise, a garden planted by a Father's love, and decked out by omnipotence, — yet we behold a faint trace of that image on the still lofty soul of man, and many a remnant of the beauties and garniture of that Paradise, in the loveliness which creation even now pre-

sents to the senses ; — but more eminently do we behold displayed, the love of our God in the blighted scene around us, than if, having tasted neither of guilt nor misery, we still dwelt amidst the bloom and the innocence of Eden. Ours, would have been comparatively, but a slight knowledge of the immutability of that love, if we had not fallen from “ original righteousness ” We should not have known how its per evering kindness bids defiance to death, had death never entered on the domains of life ; — how it bears up against aggravated sin and ingratitude, — nor how many “ waters ” of sorrow which burst in with sin, could not quench that Divine “ Love ” which is “ stronger than death ; ” which is only the more awakened and called forth by suffering. Nevertheless changed, indeed, were the immediate situation and prospects of man by his foul rebellion against the Author of his being, and the source of his happiness ; but unchanged towards him, remained the kindness of his most beneficent Creator, — unchanged, is too feeble a word, — it conveys no adequate idea of the love which the Apostle magnifies in the glowing language of the text. There was a change which took place in it, but it was a change in degree, — it rose and kindled with the occasion, — like the kind father in the parable, who seemed to pour forth a richer tide of affection to greet his pro-

digal returning in rags and misery, than he ever did in his days of virtue, when he was continually with him. So did that best of Fathers, our "Father in heaven," lavish his richest gifts and best blessings on the unthankful being who had preferred the suggestions and promises of the tempter to his allegiance, and the rich and pleasant heritage assigned him with his existence. Much of Almighty power was put forth to prepare an abode for the reception of his highly favoured creature; and it might perhaps have been justly said, on the day of man's introduction to the beauteous and abundant scene of enjoyment, opened on his view and placed at his disposal, "what more can be done for him whom the Lord delighteth to love and honour?"—But heaven had one more gift in store;—its sweets and its loveliness had been transferred in miniature to earth, and the sun which gave to heaven its light, outshone the natural luminary in diffusing over the new creation the rays of its Divine Maker's presence and favour;—but the last,—best and most wondrous gift was the consequence of the Fall:—it was not known what Omnipotence, what infinite love could do, till sorrow, till suffering were the supplicants, till He who created, set himself to repair his ruined creation. Death had been denounced on the offender,—the word of God was pledged

that the destroying angel should be permitted to do his work on the sinner, and he was allowed to commence his ravages. Then, in connexion with death, shone with its most amazing brightness, the Divine love—then was promised the Son of God, to assume our degraded form,—to tread our wilderness world, to prove that neither degradation nor sorrow, unbelief nor ingratitude,—neither the wrath of God nor the malice of men,—neither death nor life,—neither our own corruptions nor spiritual foes,—neither the depths of guilt nor the heights of heaven, should sever us from that love, till it has received us in the mansions where He awaits our coming.

Time would soon fail in the attempt to give any thing like a view of the many ways in which the love of God to his children is manifested, during the course of their education for eternity. How admirably adapted is the whole train of the Divine arrangements for evincing that love, and answering the ends it has in view! What are the Scriptures but a record of warning, of comfort, of instruction?—but a charter, but a guide, and a foretaste of the blessedness of which they treat? Mark the institutions of the Church, deduced from these Scriptures;—our first entrance into life is signalized by our entering into covenant with

our heavenly Father,—receiving the symbol and the rights of his family. The prayers in which we state our wants, are the means of drawing us more nearly to our home,—of establishing and keeping up a constant communion between Heaven and us. All the ordinances of religion, more especially the communion of the body and blood of the Saviour, are designed to have the constant effect of proving how much we are loved and cared for. The whole course of Providence is but a commentary (in the text, *God is love*,—is ever proving how mindful our Almighty Friend is of us, even when we little think of Him,—even when we wander farthest from Him. How kindly does he bear with our little improvement of His means of grace,—with our frequent undervaluing of the high hope of glory! How are we ever compelled to call to mind the scriptural statement, “*herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us!*” We must know and feel, (think what we may of ourselves,—bear what character we may among our fellow men,) that were our iniquities marked,—were the love of God to us measured by ours to Him,—did He care for us and provide for us, only in as far as we remember and obey Him,—were the constancy and fervency of His love regulated by the

faithfulness of ours to Him,—soon would the sun of our highest hopes, set in darkness;—soon would the avenger receive his commission to destroy;—soon would love resign her cares, and pity cease her pleadings, and our unthankful obdurate race be consigned to dwell with “the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched.” But the love of God is not like the love of man, dependant on an equal and sustained return in kind. It is a love not founded on any merits we can pretend to, and not therefore in danger of failing through their lamentable deficiency. It is “the love of God in Christ” that is extended to us;—and here is our security, and here is the grand secret of its permanence: it is therefore that whom He loveth, He loveth to the end;—“He spared not His own Son,”—what else will He withhold?—He has entered into covenant with our race,—a covenant ratified by the Saviour’s blood,—and hence the promise of its certainty;—*lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* Well may it be asked then, “who,” or what “shall separate us from such love?” What shall alarm or hurt us? “If God be thus for us, who can be against us?” “Tribulation and distress, persecution, famine, peril and the sword,” only unite the sufferer more closely to his God, and call forth brighter manifestations of that love,

which can speak peace to the soul, and diffuse happiness over it, when "flesh and heart faint and fail."

II. Let us now look to the GRAND FEATURE OF DIVINE LOVE, TO WHICH THE TEXT CALLS OUR NOTICE, AND OBSERVE HOW IT RESISTS EVERY AGENT AND PRINCIPLE OF CHANGE.

We considered the bearing of death on human affection,—let us look at it now in connection with that which is Divine. What is death to the Christian, but the end of sin, of suffering, of imperfection?—the troubled passage to eternal rest,—a recall from banishment,—an attestation that we have fought our fight, and "finished our course?" hence it is a mark of love. And who is the companion of this troubled passage,—this last and arduous journey? Even He who led and fed, and blessed us during the days of our pilgrimage. His love was, in solitude our companion,—was, in suffering, our soother,—and surely it will not, it cannot be withdrawn, when we are most utterly alone, and the parting agonies of flesh and spirit call for the best offices even of Divine goodness. It is most unreasonable to fear that we shall be then forsaken. Death bursts asunder every earthly tie, removes our interests from earth, and, in a great measure,

our sympathies from its inhabitants :—but it is it must be apparent, that it brings us into the most intimate communion and society of Him who loveth us ;—puts us at once in possession of all the fruits and fulness of his love : no wonder, then, the Apostle denied that “ death ” could, in any way, separate us from that love.

Neither can “ life ” disunite us “ from the love of God in Christ.” In this far distant land, its rays will shine on us, its kind offices befriend us. The dangers of our way,—the temptations to which we are exposed, will only occasion a manifestation of it, proportionate to our needs. Let it be our care that neither the business, nor the pleasures, nor the honours of life, win our love from God ; and we may rest assured that neither in its trials, nor its infirmities, any more than in its happiest and most joyous moments, shall His love to us, diminish or fail.

In addition to the persuasion, “ that neither life nor death will separate us from the love of God,” is the assurance, that the evil spirits, whose great business it is to tempt and mislead, will fail in the accomplishment of their object, as well as “ the principalities and powers ” of earth, if they should make a similar attempt. These latter, set themselves in array against the early Christians, —visited them

with every mark of obloquy and suffering, they threatened them with the vengeance of their gods, as they made them the victims of human malice; but firm in the approbation, and love, and good offices of Him, for whom they suffered, they were enabled to set at nought their persecutors, and to be more than conquerors through Him that loved them: and so should we, if we be indeed Christians, were earth and all her potentates to set themselves against us, as of old against them;—who, stained with their blood—the mark for every scoff—accounted the effacing and refuse of society, were the objects of His love,—His undeviating love, who is “the Prince of the kings of the earth;”—the source of honour,—the giver of blessings that earthly monarchs never had to bestow.

What are our present circumstances?—Certainly, with all of us, those of sin, of temptation and weakness,—of some portion of sorrow and anxiety. These will not sever us from the love of God,—with Him is pardon,—strength to be made perfect, even in our infirmities; and it has been already seen that sorrow will never alienate Him who is the afflicted’s friend.

What are our prospects?—Death and judgment. He will be our life in the one, our acquittal in the other; and when all things are

dissolving; His love will be more firm and unshaken, the more we cling to it. "Mountains may depart, and hills be removed," but, more stable than the base of the everlasting hills, His loving-kindness shall shine forth most conspicuously amid falling spheres and a world in ruins!

Are ours the heights of prosperity?—His love will not leave us—to it, we owe every minor and earthly blessing. Are we in the depths of affliction and misfortune? His love has ever been, and will be, the companion of the mourner who seeks its aid.

Let, then, the circumstance, or agent, or event be named, which shall separate us from the love of God; earth does not furnish it, nor hell: it is not found beneath nor above,—in time nor in eternity. It can exist only in the perverseness of our own hearts, in the blindness of our own understandings. If we persist in, and habitually practise sin, we have no portion or lot in the love of Him whose name is Holy. If we love not Him we erect a barrier between His love and us. In fact, the man who loves not God, has not accepted, he thrusts from him, the proffered friendship of heaven, and must abide the results of his own choosing and malice. It is only by men of faith and penitence, who are anxious for the perfection which earth cannot yield,

nor nature attain, that the love of the God of Christianity can be experienced;—only they who approach His mercy-seat, and implore His good offices in the Saviour's name, that have any reason to expect a share in the love that never wearies and cannot fail.

And now, what is the result of the whole subject on our minds? Who does not wish for the persuasion of the Apostle? What child of mortality wishes not an assurance of Divine love to sustain him in death,—to soothe him in sorrow?—to obtain certainty on the only important and abiding matters of interest?—Who will be so unwise as to leave the attainment of this persuasion to the seasons when he wants it, and should have it uppermost in mind and ready at hand?

Now is the time to seek for a full persuasion; for, if that is to be gotten any where, it is to be procured as the consequence of our faith,—which rests on reason, which is built on miracle,—on prophecy,—on the experience of ages. And where is assurance to be had, if not from this source? Here St. Paul met with it; a man whose national and individual prejudices could not stand before Christianity,—a man of sober and well-informed mind;—who gave up earthly station and prospects,—resigned fame and ease,—finally, yielded up his life in the confidence that he was attaching himself to no

“cunningly devised fable,” but to the God of Truth, and the tenderness of the Saviour’s love. The disciples of Mahomet or of Bramah, (it may be said,) have attained a similar persuasion,—and granting they have, what is the nature of their worship,—what are their lives,—what is the heaven to which they look forward? Ask them for their evidences,—their chain of argument,—examine the chronology of the one, the doctrines of the other,—look to the death of the disciples of each,—ask them—(but it is not needful, if we had it in our power,)—to define their hope—will it, for a moment, bear comparison with the assurance of the Apostle? Just as well as the wretched philosophy of Hindostan, or the brutal ignorance of the disciples of the false prophet, will bear a competition, with the rational philosophy and general intelligence of our own Christian and enlightened land. The blasphemy of the infidel, and the doubts of the sceptic, are not to be endured, ~~and~~ the blaze of light which surrounds, and considering the mass of evidence which attests our religion. How little soever we may be disposed to practice Christianity, we cannot shake its credibility. O then, let us be anxious to have its truth, as the ground on which our minds can securely repose, when troubles arise, and all things are reeling and fading around us:—let us be soli-

citous to have for our frame of mind, in life, a persuasion, a good hope, that we are acting religiously and conscientiously, and for our song of triumph at last,—*I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

SERMON IV.

THE PRESENT LIMITED STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S KNOWLEDGE IN THE MYSTERIES OF GOD.

1 COR. xiii. 9.

For we know in part.

WE are surrounded by mysteries, wondrous and inexplicable to ourselves; the beings with which we are conversant, whether animate or inanimate, rational or irrational, afford to us innumerable instances from which to learn how small are our capacities, how limited our minds, how the works of creation which surround us, bear testimony to their Divine Author. by setting at defiance our endeavours to comprehend even those of them, which are most simple and most common. Where is the object with which we are best acquainted, about which science has arrived at the most definite conclusions, or which is most apparent and familiar to common observation,—about

which, in some respect, or measure, or connexion, we are not ignorant,—which raises not barriers to our farther discovery,—that say “hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther?” Where, in fine, is the matter of human science or experience, or belief, of which we are not compelled to make the avowal in the text,—“We know but in part?”

Such being the case with nature, with ourselves, with all around us,—mysteries meeting us in every object, and problems insoluble by the highest powers of reason, whithersoever we turn our regards;—need we be surprised, if, with respect to religion, that system which tells us of an infinite God, and an untried futurity, our minds should encounter many things which they do not, which, in this state of being, they cannot comprehend? It treats of subjects the most stupendous and the most sublime, of the essence of the Creator, of the attributes of the Supreme, of “the heights and depths, and length and breadth” of that which Infinite Wisdom alone can measure and understand,—it bids us contemplate the Spirit which created all, pervades all, upholds all,—and as easily can we ride on the wings of the wind, and ascertain “whence it cometh and whither it goeth,”—as easily descend to the foundations of the earth, or answer the question, where and what were we when those founda-

tions were laid,—as, “by our searching, find out God,” as falsify the inspired assertion, which characterises and limits human attainment. We know in part.

And yet, there are not wanting some who object to Christianity because it contains mysteries, who confound it, in this respect, with those false religions which made it matter of policy to shut up in concealment their origin and real character: there are not wanting persons unreasonable enough to demand that the unsearchable things of God should be made apparent to their narrow minds and bounded capacities,—that the finite should be able to comprehend the infinite,—that the worm of earth should be able to crawl to the heights of heaven, and that the insect whose sphere of vision can take in but few and little of the objects that surround him, should look with fearless and intelligent gaze on the glories and sublimities before which the seraph veils his face with his wings, trusting, where he cannot trace, and adoring where he cannot understand.

Nothing is more easy than to shew the folly and presumption and unsoundness of all objections against religion drawn from this source. For, in the first place, in matters of science and the affairs of life, the principle which operates in these ill-constructed minds to the

rejection of revelation, does not operate against the creed of the philosopher, nor does it interfere with the belief or practice of men in the occupations and interests of life. The one will not give up as false, all his theorems and demonstrations because there are some scientific doctrines which he knows he never can prove, which he firmly believes, although he cannot demonstrate: nor does the other forswear the world and its concerns, because he cannot analyse nor account for, all or perhaps any, of the phenomena that surround him.

In the second place, there are only certain cases in which mysteries ought to render a religion suspected; when they conceal its origin, when they involve some contradiction, when they encourage some practice opposed to virtue and to good morals, or when some system can be found which contains fewer difficulties than that which is called in question, because it is mysterious. I believe no one present is likely to maintain that Christianity is at all affected by any of these suppositions: every well-disciplined and candid mind will account for what is mysterious in our faith, on the principle of human ignorance, on the principle of our text,—“We know in part.” To no doctrine will this principle apply more satisfactorily than to the doctrine of the Trinity;

that doctrine which has been a subject of cavil to the conceited, and half-learned, and disingenuous in all ages of the Church : a doctrine about which there would have never been any dispute, had men submitted themselves to the authority and plain sense of Scripture, and thought as humbly of themselves as the meanness and narrowness and utter inadequacy of their faculties, when applied to such mysteries, should have taught them to think.

It is distinctly and unequivocally laid down in Scripture, that in the essence of the Godhead there are three persons, " the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost : " what is exactly meant by essence, or by persons, we cannot distinctly say, — they are the only terms which the imperfection of language furnishes to designate that which language can never express : — in the same way we employ the terms Unity and Trinity to mark ideas which are far above human arithmetic and calculation ; by the former we cannot be understood to limit, nor by the latter to multiply or divide, " the Holy One of Israel. " We admit that the doctrine passes human comprehension — and so does the union between an immaterial spirit and a material body — and so does the creation of all things out of nothing — and so do the omniscience and omnipresence and eternity of God ! You reject the one (may

we say to the infidel), why pretend to believe the others?

But it is assuredly a greater mystery than the doctrine of the Trinity, or any other mystery at which the presumption of man chooses to take offence, that, 'supposing the doctrine to be false, such a one as Jesus of Nazareth, that teacher sent from God, so jealous of the honour of His Father, so anxious for the establishment of truth, so full of zeal for the salvation of men, should, to say the least, have spoken so ambiguously of Himself as to admit of the possibility of men mistaking Him for a Divine person,—should have countenanced the titles, and the honours, and the worship of Divinity with which His followers addressed Him, and by which they paid to Him their homage. It is most strange that Prophets and Apostles, that Saints and Martyrs, inculcated and were guilty of idolatry,—that the most pious, and most learned and most zealous after truth in all ages of the Church, should have been permitted by that God whom they sought with all their hearts, to whom their prayers ascended, for heavenly light, and whose lives and writings give abundant evidence that they sought it not in vain, should have so grievously erred, or been so wantonly misled as to worship the creature equally with the Creator, and to pray to and trust in an imaginary God.

more limited than it is, and religion sustained by a far less satisfactory and unassailable body of evidence than we possess; still there would be more of mystery, more of difficulty in the idea that beings like ourselves are formed for no other purpose than to eat, to drink, and to die:—and 'suppose the maxim that has been referred to, is a false one,—that religion is true, and demands, on our peril, the attention of every one of us,—where shall be the portion of the unbelieving sensualist, but in the abodes most justly assigned to him?

Let deism, in any shape, be suggested, of course revelation is rejected; and O how mysterious that so good, so sublime, so holy a deception, so well authenticated a falsehood, should ever have been got up! Say that all religions are indifferent to the Supreme Being, and that the old worshippers at Cyprus were as acceptable to God as were Abraham, or Moses, or Daniel, as are the followers of Jesus Christ:—is there no mystery, is there no difficulty, is there no contradiction here? or, finally, is that system without either, which teaches, that though God created and endowed us, he does not care what his creatures believe or practise?

But let the infidel take the only consistent course, and recommend that we believe nothing;—and let us welcome the waste, and

the void, and the chillness of atheism! Farewell the distinctions of virtue and of vice,—of truth and falsehood;—the hope of reward, the fear of punishment;—all law and all restraint. Farewell the asylum to which the weary and heavy laden have hitherto looked with anxious eyes,—the abodes to which they have pressed forward as free from toil and from trouble. Let the evergreen of hope which we had planted on the graves of those we loved and have lost, which we treasured to deck our own, dry up and wither;—there will no morning ever dawn on the night of the grave,—we shall follow them to silence and to nothingness. A few more troubled, imperfect joys, a few more sorrows, and then come the pangs and the groans which close for ever our profitless, mysterious being!

But we feel that this would be no remedy for our doubts, no lessening of our difficulties,—that it would be exchanging something for nothing,—light for darkness,—despair for hope:—and we return, and are glad to return to religion, mysterious though it be,—and we account for all mystery, and remove every difficulty, by the inspired assurance, that now “we know only in part.” We cling to the faith in which the best and the holiest and most dignified of men have lived and died,—which is attested by the sufferings of martyrs,

- "built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, having Jesus Christ for the chief corner stone:" the faith in which our forefathers finished their course,—which has ever been the balm of sorrow, the soother of affliction, the best nurse of the sick, the life of the dead. We yield up our reason to the revelation of God, we rest satisfied with what He hath seen fit to discover to us, we are prepared for mysteries in a system which treats of the divine nature and of the world to come,—for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" to conceive the mystery of godliness, the things which are unseen and eternal.

And yet we know enough,—enough for man to know that he may be holy and happy,—enough to render us awfully accountable for all the deeds we do in the body. We are made acquainted with our relation to an infinite Creator;—with our fall from original righteousness, our guilt and our condemnation while impenitent and rebellious;—our pardon and our reconciliation to God, when, believing in the Saviour and pleading His merits, we obtain peace with heaven. We are exhorted to pray for the renewing influences of the Spirit of holiness to create us anew in the Divine Image, to bring us forward, "growing in grace" and in every Christian disposition, till

we become meet for full communion with our Father in heaven. And will any one be able to plead at the last, if his shall be the doom to misery,—that he knew not his duty, that he knew not how to escape the wrath to come, that he was born in sin, and no pardon was offered;—with headstrong passions and restless temptations, and no strength was afforded to assist his weakness? The most untutored son of heathenism, the devotee of stocks and of stones, will not dare to plead this, and wilt thou, Christian, born in a land of light, and made acquainted with thy God and thy duty almost as soon as with thy parents and their love? Little as we know; our knowledge is amply sufficient to make us “wise unto salvation.”

But a day is coming, a state of being awaiting us, when we shall no longer “know only in part,”—for “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away:”—now, in the infancy of our being, our knowledge is suited to our state of imperfection; now we are on probation, in train for heaven,—educating to be holy;—in the world to come, we shall be admitted to the full blaze of intellectual light, the full discovery of heavenly mysteries which is to constitute one of the rewards of the blessed. *Here* our faculties are miserably defective, *there* shall they attain

to more than angelic capacity, and be able to comprehend as much, even of the greatest mystery of all, the essence of Deity, as created intelligence can receive. *Here*, we are in affliction, in the midst of toil, of care, and of temptation; and it is part of the consequence of sin that our knowledge is circumscribed; our *home* is not *here*, therefore are we ignorant. Our souls are not yet pure from sin, nor severed from the grossness of matter. There,—in that world towards which we are hastening, sorrow, care and toil being ended, sin destroyed, and our souls united to spiritual bodies, we shall no longer “see through a glass darkly, but face to face;” then, in a measure, shall “we know, even as we are known.”

Thus do we connect with Death,—with the changes to which he will introduce us, ideas the most happy and glorious: this visitor, so much dreaded by all, deserves not the name of a foe,—for it is he who will, in effect, raise the curtain that conceals us from all that is most interesting to the renewed mind. We possess minds naturally panting after knowledge, susceptible of high ideas and lofty conceptions,—to which knowledge and light are as food and nourishment; and death will transport us to those regions where there shall be no check to knowledge, and no bar to mental delight. “How,” exclaims an eloquent divine.

of another country and communion, "how will the soul be delighted, when this curtain is lifted up? When, instead of assisting in the devotions of the earthly sanctuary, it shall find itself amid the choirs of angels, in the midst of the 'ten thousand times ten thousand' that surround the throne of God! When, instead of hearing the feeble lisps of praise which earthly worship can send forth, the hallelujahs of heaven shall burst upon the ear,—and the 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,' chaunted by more voices than there are waves in the sea, or grains of sand upon its shore! When, instead of listening to the accents of an earthly teacher, who makes efforts to develop the few imperfect ideas of which his limited faculties are capable, it shall find itself at the feet of the Great Teacher of the Church, 'the author and finisher of its faith!' And instead of tracing some attributes of the Creator in the beauties and magnificence of nature, it is introduced to that New Jerusalem of which God himself is the beauty and the grandeur!" And shall we yet fear death? and do we need consolation as we approach the grave? and shall we have need to summon all our constancy, all our firmness as we draw near to it? Must we be *torn* from earth? must we be *dragged* to heaven? I fear, if this be the case,—habitually and markedly the case with us,—we know

little or nothing yet; our spiritual education is yet to begin. Let us then strive after our full regeneration, our emancipation from the fetters of ignorance and sin and sensuality:—death will then be to us what the fiery chariot was to Elijah, —the opening clouds will reveal to us unimaginable beauties, ineffable delights. Oh, let us establish a right to, let us cherish anticipations of the glories awaiting the Christian! and then death will usher us to life,—will put the consummation to our felicity,—will dissipate all darkness,—will explain all difficulties,—will crown all hopes.

SERMON V

SPIRITUAL^d CONSOLATION.

PSALM XCIV. 19.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul.

THE Psalm, of which the verse chosen as our text forms a part, was evidently suggested to the mind of the composer by circumstances of mournful reflection in relation to himself, and objects around him in which he felt interested : by *a multitude of troubled thoughts* which disturbed his peace. Human life is still the unsettled, chequered scene it ever was—still the sorrows, and the ills which sin, has caused, continue to fill our days with heaviness and mourning, and their pressure, from the first plaintive cry of infancy, to the last gasp of expiring nature, is adding every hour, every moment of our lives, testimony to the fact, that *man is born unto trouble*. Even the believer in Jesus Christ, though bright are his hopes, and

firm the foundation of his happiness, drinks, and frequently drinks deeply, of the cup of sorrow. His consolation however is, that there are comforts, many and sufficient comforts to lighten the woes of time, by imparting to him, according to his needs, some foretastes of the happiness of eternity. Let us, my brethren, with a view to the improvement of our souls in religious feeling and tempers, contemplate some of the many sorrows to which we are so liable; and O! may we never experience them, without, at the same time, enjoying those comforts, which will turn suffering into delight, and mourning into gladness.

I. *In the multitude of distressing thoughts* which may arise in our minds, it must be allowed that, in all ages, the state of the world and the Church will have a place. The Christian is, on the most conscientious of all grounds, a lover of his fellow creatures,—interested in their temporal, but more especially in their eternal welfare. He weeps over the woes of suffering humanity, but he sorrows more deeply for the millions who, in disobedience to heaven, and indulgence in sin, are preparing for themselves the endless miseries denounced against the irreligious. He looks around him, and beholds a great portion of the world still immersed in heathen darkness, or

misled by delusions, little better than those of 'heathenism. He sees Christianity itself marred by the corruptions of man, and on account of its deteriorated state, producing little of the holiness and the happiness of which it ought to be the source. *The form of godliness without the power*; every where meets his eye,—the loudest professions frequently connected with the most inconsistent practice. Infidelity too, is now and then permitted to rear its head, and parade its blasphemies. The name he adores is insulted, and the hopes he cherishes are treated with scorn. All these sources of unhappy feeling, with others that might be mentioned of a similar nature, go to form the *multitude of thoughts within him*, by which the Psalmist felt himself oppressed.

But the above is only a part of the mental struggles, and subjects of uneasiness, to which, in this his state of probation, the believer is exposed. Those are of a more formidable nature, and more frequent occurrence, which immediately affect his own interest and happiness—his spiritual concerns, and prospects for eternity. He may suffer under bodily, or domestic affliction, or worldly loss; and we know how all these press upon the mind even of him who is not accustomed to expect his reward and his happiness here. Christianity, even in its most advanced stage of influence, does not

suppress, nor is it designed to suppress, all our human feelings. Severe and long protracted bodily ailment may weary out the most exemplary patience, and shake the strongest mind. Domestic calamities,—the loss, by fickleness or death, of the dearest friends in whom the life was almost bound up, and the affections were perhaps too much wrapt, may visit us with a weight of affliction, more overwhelming than any thing we could suffer in our own persons. Not to dwell upon the desertions to which the faithlessness of man may expose us. O how continually are disease and death making inroads in the circle of those we love, and deeply wounding our dearest, our warmest affections! To use the language of an eloquent divine—"Death stands by, the witness of every human engagement; mocks our hopes, and rejoices over the blanks he will soon make in our society, and the blight he will throw over our hearts." I speak not of the loss of property,—the ruin of worldly prospects—every day is telling us of some calamity of this description, which is filling the heart of the sufferer with a *multitude of anxious and troubled thoughts*.

But, independently of what they are in themselves, these calamities may derive a ten-fold power of afflicting, from the state of mind in which they may visit their victim. He may

view them in no other light, than as the signal marks of the Divine displeasure, the first shades of that darkness which is by and by to close on him for ever. He is tempted to doubt, whether the Almighty beholds him with an eye of favour; he is apt to inquire, how it happens, that if he be an object of divine love, his pilgrimage is so full of toil and sorrow, - why, if his path be that of the just, he does not enjoy throughout it, some dawnings of that blessed light, which might betoken the brilliance of *the perfect day* which is awaiting him!

We have now to notice some other causes of troubled thoughts, of a nature more formidable still, than any which have been mentioned. They are wholly of a mental and spiritual nature, and may be considered as affecting the Christian's peace at the commencement, during the progress, or in the prospect of the close of his career. At the commencement, when the seeds of religion are putting forth their first tender shoots in a soil prepared indeed for their reception, but still productive of many a weed, and still exposed to many an unkindly blast, there is a probability that in the weakness of faith, fears may arise lest the repentant sinner may have placed an unfounded trust in, and made to himself an unwarranted application of the mercy of God;—lest his sorrow for sin may have been defective, and the sense

of pardon, he thought that he felt, delusive: in short, the doubt may occur, whether his guilt be not too great for pardon, or through his imperfect application of the appointed means, the forgiveness which the Gospel offers, may not become available to him. Thoughts like these, sometimes check and mar the delights of those who have just tasted that the Lord is gracious. They threaten the soul with the darkness of a most distressing night, when it had rejoiced in the first visits of the Sun of righteousness.

A sense of past guilt and of present imperfection, frequently gives rise to a *multitude of painful thoughts* even in him who is considerably advanced in his Christian course. Distressing thoughts of this nature, are probably, when they do occur, more severely felt at this stage of his progress than they can be at an earlier. For the more correct notions he has formed of the divine nature and holiness, the more exceedingly sinful will the iniquities of former days appear to him: the more intimate communion too, he enjoys with his heavenly Father, the more odious will appear to him, those defilements which at a former period, kept him at a distance from the source of life and happiness.

But it is the *present state* of our hearts and conduct, which must occasionally fill us with

gloomy thoughts when we reflect on what our religion requires us to be. We do not find, as perhaps we once expected, that all things are become new and right in the state of our hearts; we still find that we cannot always do the good we wish to do,—that our best services are mixed with sin,—that our affections, instead of always and progressively rising to heaven, are continually sinking to earth,—that the heart is not always where it should be, in the better country, where alone are our treasure and our home. We cannot but be aware too, of the little improvement we make of our many advantages, nor avoid sorrowing that we are still, after all the cultivation which our God bestows upon our souls, “so barren and unfruitful.”

It is not wonderful that considerations such as these which have been mentioned, should make us doubt our stability and final perseverance in the faith. How can we assure ourselves that sin, which remains within us, may not finally obtain the dominion—that, in our arduous warfare with the “principalities and powers,” which cost a hard conflict even to the Son of God, we may not sustain defeat, and the contest end in our ruin? And it is not always the case, that in the prospect of dissolution, Faith and Hope are at their posts in the Christian’s heart, and the song of triumph

on his lips: more or less, that closing scene is one of anxiety even to him. The idea of passing at once, from this scene and system of things with which we are so familiar, and to which, in spite of all its ills, we are so attached, to the eternal world, where all is so new and so incomprehensible,—of going to the presence of a most Holy Judge,—to a tribunal where there is hope only for the guiltless, is to all the feelings of our nature, one, full of matter for anxious and solemn reflexion. The question, “O how shall I appear! when summoned to that other and changeless state, and placed before the bar, has agitated the mind of many a believer.—Such are “the multitude of thoughts” which may distress our souls and disturb our peace,—thoughts excited by the miseries incident to fallen nature, by the weakness of faith, and the enmity of the powers of darkness: their number is formidable, and their power of annoyance great.

II.—But we now turn to the other part of our text; and comfort and hope may arise upon the most troubled and anxious heart: *in the multitude of my thoughts within me; Thy comforts delight my soul.*

In his distress, does the Christian have recourse to himself?—he knows that there frequently lies the cause of disquiet. Does he

repair to the world?—he knows that all it has to give in the way of consolation, would be but as “songs to a heavy heart,” and worse even than the miserable comforters of the afflicted Patriarch. It may divert some of our lighter sorrows, but who ever knew it to alleviate the pains of a bed of sickness, or light up hope in the eye of death? Who ever knew it supply the place of a friend he had lost, or fill up the void of a desert heart? No,—the Christian is wiser than to go to such a source for comfort; happier, because he has a better to which he may repair; for he can have recourse to his God, in no time more acceptably, more successfully, than “in all time of his tribulation.” And how severe soever his distresses may be, however protracted may have been their influence, their reign and their power terminate, when on his knees, the believer repairs to *the throne of grace*,—lays hold of the altar, on which the great sacrifice, whence flows all his hope, was offered,—pleads the recorded promises of God, and begs that he may taste their sweets, by being enabled, as in former days, to apply them to himself. Soon an answer is obtained, precisely suited to his particular needs, and we shall very briefly contemplate the several comforts, thence to be derived, in connexion with the demands for consolation which have been laid before us.

In general, there seems to be one which, I think, arises from the very grounds of distress themselves; for many of those which have been noticed, will not occur to persons who have not, in the way religion points out, secured to themselves the favour and blessing of God.

With regard to the state of the Church and the world, there are comforting considerations exactly suited to the ground of disquiet. The cause of religion, and the salvation of man, are in the hands of the God of goodness, justice and truth, and He will provide for them. He will vindicate, in all cases, the interests of virtue and piety, and give to the oppressor his due, —to the violent and impious, their punishment. He will grant to his Church, in due time, the prosperity and glory of the *latter days*;—and though infidelity and disorder might seem, among the nations of the world, to triumph for a season, He on his throne in the heaven of heavens would laugh the enemy to scorn,—hold him in the most perfect derision;—shew Himself, ere long, the God to whom *vengeance belongeth*;—bringing to nought the counsels, and confounding the devices of all the enemies of Himself and His people.

Again,—Is the Christian suffering under personal affliction?—and does there arise to him from this source, the fear that he possesses no

share in the Divine love? What can be brought more suitably home to his mind by the best interpreter of His own words, the Spirit of God, than the inspired declaration, *whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth*? — When we behold our friends suffering around us, and cannot help them, with confidence we may always commend them to His mercies who alone can deliver:—when we follow them to the tomb, we shall, ere long, find that He can supply the place of the best and the dearest; and have the assurance, that, if they died in the profession of faith in Christ, we shall meet them again, and recommence a union never to be embittered by sin, nor broken by death. Do those in whom we placed confidence,—on whom we built much of our happiness, forsake us?—there is One who will never grow cold in His love to us, and never fail in His good offices; and it may be for our benefit that objects are removed which divided our love to our God. If misfortunes blast our fair temporal prospects, we shall, if we make use of our privileges, find that we are not destitute, but may lean on Him who will withhold from us nothing that is for our good.

But further,—even should a sense of past sin, so far gain possession of the Christian's mind, that he doubts his being within reach of the Divine mercy, how full of comfort are

all the invitations to sinners which so many pages of the sacred record present! How soon may he turn to, and assure himself of the promise annexed to the invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Under his sense of imperfection too, and unfruitfulness,—his proneness to yield to temptation, how delightfully may he recur to the language of Sacred Writ, with respect to the Being with whom he has to do—"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passest by the transgressions of thy people?"—that givest them the victory over all the enemies of their souls,—making "His grace sufficient for them, and perfecting His strength in their weakness!"

It has been already remarked, that death is even to the Christian an awful visitant; especially when it arrives, accompanied with the fear that he may come short of eternal life:—but how comforting the assurance, "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance!"—Entering upon the "valley of the shadow of death," he will hear the consolation whispered, "Fear not, I am with thee." He may look forward to the glorious morning of the Resurrection,—assure himself that he is going to lie down in the earth, to renew, like the fabled giant of antiquity, his strength,—that he shall thence arise with all the vigour of

immortality. The comforts he may take to himself, will enable him to triumph over the tomb, —to raise the exulting anthem, “O death, where is thy sting?—O grave, where is thy victory?” —he knows that he shall conquer death,—be acquitted in judgment, and happy for ever. — We cannot paint the blessedness of the heaven to which the believer looks forward,—this last, best comfort, to be appreciated, must be enjoyed.

Now, in conclusion—who is there, knowing any thing of religion, that does not know the sufficiency of these comforts to the various and corresponding distresses of the Christian life? —Who has felt the one, that has not had an opportunity of proving the worth, the excellency of the other?—has not found the comforts of religion productive of delight,—that they bring with them, that peace and pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give, which the frowns of the world, and the god of the world, cannot take away?—When we take a survey of human life,—its sorrows, and the diseases which lead to its melancholy close, we are apt to be filled with despair,—to think it would be better for us that we had not been born.—Gloomy indeed, would be the aspect of the world, hopeless the prospects of man, were it not that in the religion of Jesus, a light arises to relieve the gloom, to cheer the pros-

pects.—Are we, my brethren, availing ourselves of this light,—have we secured to ourselves for the season of our extremity, the consolations which our faith, and it alone, can impart?—Have we believed in the Son of God?—Have we repaired to Him for pardon?—Are we continually soliciting from Him, the supplies which our spiritual wants demand?—He is the grand panacea for the ills of life,—the remedy for its diseases, the soother of its cares. Without the comforts to delight us, which flow from faith in Him, we are destitute, we must be miserable.

Permit me now, most earnestly to exhort you to have constant recourse to these comforts—you who are in any affliction or care, take the visitation as a merciful call from your best friend, to secure in His friendship your true interests. You, who have, at some former period, felt the stroke of suffering, remember how wretched you must have been, without the religious consolations, which, it is hoped, you then enjoyed. And you, who have yet been visited by no heavy sorrow,—the lightness of whose hearts, has, as yet, received no check,—to whom health is prodigal of her blessings,—competence, of its comforts,—friends, of their endearments;—remember the time will come, may be near, when grief shall fill your hearts and sadden your countenances

—when friends shall sink to the grave at your side—when, finally, the pulse which now beats with such healthful regularity, shall tell of the pressure of disease—when death shall call you from your enjoyments and your hopes. Be wise in time,—lay up a store of blessings for the evil day which shall come upon you. He, who is now enforcing on you the importance of possessing yourselves of the comforts and resources of religion, cannot indeed plead an extensive experience in the subjects of which he treats—but still he feels that a comparatively happy course of life, is not always to be his portion,—and he would not resign for worlds, the comforts which, in seasons of sorrow, he hopes to possess; did he not desire to secure them as his, he would stand convicted to his own mind of folly, of madness. Were he not assured of their value and efficacy, he would tremble for the state of his heart, and his hopes. It is therefore now pressed upon you to think of what share you can appropriate to yourselves of the consolations which the Gospel imparts,—it is therefore that you are intreated; as you value your peace,—your happiness, to seek God for a friend and heaven for a portion. Take, as did the Psalmist, “the Lord for your defence,”—the everlasting Father for “the rock of your refuge.” Then indeed, will you be armed at all points, against the

sorrows of life, the terrors of death, the malignancy and assaults of spiritual enemies—*then will the foundation of your bliss stand sure.* Grief will soon, when it visits you, be banished from the heart—tears wiped away from the eyes,—peace given you from all warfare and alarm. May we in life enjoy such happiness and comforts as religion can give—such assurance and good hope at death, as religion can impart,—and may the blessed eternity be ours, which it secures for its disciples, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

SERMON VI.

THE GOSPII. REPORT, AND THE DANGER OF
DESPISING IT.

ISAIAH liii. 1.

*Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of
the Lord revealed?*

SUCH was the lamentation of the prophet,—such was the melancholy result of his view of the state of his countrymen as to religion; as to their reception of the truths which the Almighty made him the instrument of communicating;—but it was chiefly in a prophetic sense that he uttered this complaint,—with reference to the rejection by his countrymen of the Son of God, in a future age: he had just been giving a beautiful and animated description of the blessings of the Saviour's kingdom, which were one day to be so generally diffused—but he is forced to stop, in his sublime and cheering anticipation—to turn his eye on the diminishing glories of his country and its awful doom, which was to be the con-

sequence of the rejection and murder of the Messiah. He beheld Israel deaf to conviction—blind to evidence, and he deplores her unbelief in the affecting remonstrance, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”—Well might such a complaint issue from the lips of the Son of God,—“who came unto his own, and his own received Him not.”—Well might even the apostles, who with greater success succeeded Him in his ministry, make the same complaint. And our times, favoured and Christian as they are, do *they* furnish no occasion for the mournful reflection, that few have believed the Gospel report, and that by few the arm of the Lord has been seen and acknowledged? Have the tidings of salvation an universal, a welcome reception? Are their effects seen evidently operating in the lives of men? May not the minister of religion still, and not without reason, take up the lamentation of the prophet—“Who hath believed our report?”—Still God speaks, and man will not hear,—His doings are abroad in the earth, and man will not see.—He pleads—He threatens—He invites—He denounces!—A Saviour comes,—glad tidings are published,—miracle is prodigal of her wonders, and mercy of her promises,—thunders are rolled,—the voice of love is heard, and the world goes on—society holds

its downward course as though no voice had warned, as though no proclamation had gone forth—"Deliver them from going down to the pit—I have found a ransom."

I. WHAT IS THE REPORT WHICH IS ADDRESSED TO US?

We have only seriously to contemplate it for a moment, to wonder—if we have not listened to it, to hear it, if we never did so before. Of what does the Gospel report inform us? to what does it exhort us? Does it not tell us of an eternal world, our destinies in which depend on our conduct in *this*? does it not tell the sad story of our fallen nature—of deserved misery? does it not proclaim the tender mercy of our God in the allowance of space, opportunity, and means of repentance? does it not tell the wondrous tidings of an incarnate and crucified Redeemer? Now, if there be meaning in words—if there be feeling in man—what tremendous meaning is contained in such a message—what sensation should be excited by such intelligence!—*Eternity!*—happiness or misery, in *eternity!*—God, made man—going forth to combat man's foes—descending to man's humblest condition—taking his guilt—bearing his merited punishment!—What love is here,—what a putting forth of effort—what a concern felt for the

interests of man!—what a magnitude and solemnity thrown about those interests! And man for whom all this is done and felt, is the only being in the universe who knows not himself, who appreciates not his Maker's love,—who dares run the risk of changing love into hatred, the invitations of mercy into the thunders of Sinai, because he will listen to another message than that of the Gospel—even to the suggestions of a bad heart and the false representations of the enemy of his soul!—The ear is open at once to the voice of temporal interest and pleasure,—the things seen and temporal need no revelation nor enforcement,—they occupy the attention—they give impulse to the efforts: to the slightest considerations is religion postponed, and this, though life is a dream, though the world is admitted to be unsatisfying, deceitful and perishing; though death is ever ready to awaken from the slumber of insensibility by an introduction to awful realities—to induce a terrible conviction of the vanity of all beneath the sun, by a contact with that which is spiritual and eternal.

II. THERE ARE NO GROUNDS ON WHICH WE CAN EXCUSE OURSELVES, IF WE ARE AMONG THE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO ARE DEAF TO THE REPORT OF THE GOSPEL, AND

BLIND TO THE MANIFESTATIONS OF DIVINITY AND POWER WHICH ACCREDIT IT.

The report is sufficiently spread—it is loudly proclaimed,—it is well avouched. Who has not heard the warning—"flee from the wrath to come,"—who has not been told, "this is the way, walk ye in it?" Who has not heard of the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness"—of the examples proposed for the imitation of mankind? The Gospel is preached almost in every street,—the Scriptures are, or may be, in every hand,—the precept is full and clear, "to die unto sin and live unto righteousness,"—explanation is earnest and loud,—the character of God is, as clearly as needed be, revealed to us,—the world to come is set before us in colours well fitted to attract the eye; if men do not hear, it is because they *will not*,—if they do not see, it is because they impiously close the eyes of their understandings.

III. BUT WHENCE ARISES,—WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE INFATUATION OF THOSE OF WHOM THE PROPHET COMPLAINS?

Man is naturally so full of self-love—so anxious for happiness, so cautious to avoid pain and misery—that there is surely, some most operative cause at work in producing the

so prevalent insensibility to the deeply affecting tidings of the Gospel: self-love, rightly understood, would lead men to nothing so directly as an acceptance of the terms of salvation: it is *unbelief*—the besetting sin of our nature—the strong-hold—the chief temptation of the spirit that misleads and would ruin man,—which causes him to err so glaringly from the paths in which self-interest would impel him to walk. “Who hath believed our report?” The corrupt mind is at enmity with God and at variance with purity,—ready at once to disbelieve what it does not like,—and it certainly is not well-affected to the holiness and self-denial which Christianity renders indispensable: this principle fully explains all the infidelity that is abroad in our land. We do not for a moment admit that it can arise from any defect in the evidences of Christianity,—here, if any where, we feel ourselves safe. In the miracles of the Son of God,—in the vast assemblage of proofs that our religion is divine, we intrench ourselves as in a sure fortress. Avowed infidelity—the infidelity which, not content with the degradation and ruin inseparably connected with it, seeks to propagate its poison—sends forth its follies and its falsehoods to mislead the unwary—to dissolve the bonds of society—to do away with all which is and has been for ages,

esteemed sacred, is an insult to our country, —is an attack on its most hallowed institutions and sanctions, which ought to call forth the country's indignation;—the indulgence shewn to it is either weakness or crime; life, property and reputation are well protected by those laws which visit with severe penalty any assault upon either, but if the best hopes of men are to be made a mockery,—if the most solemn sanctions are to be made the sport and the jest of every ignorant or conceited being void of principle and respectability,—if men are to be tolerated in making merchandize of blasphemy, surely there is some want of wisdom, of caution, of foresight in the guardians of the land,—there is an inadequacy or a spirit of slumber in the laws: True, no man should be persecuted for his opinions, be they what they may—but then he must not be allowed to send forth the poison of such as are subversive of that religion which is the foundation of the laws of our country. It is not liberty, it is *licentiousness* which would plead for so pestilent a privilege;—and better had the profligate bound in chains of adamant—be rendered powerless by the restrictions of despotism, than that one soul should perish through its foul abuse,—than that our country should incur the condemnation of permitting the name of her God and the love of her Sa-

viour,—all that she holds holy and venerable, to be pointed at as drivelling and fabulous. Religion, indeed, need never fear discussion, the efforts of infidelity are as impotent in the conflict with truth as they are malignant and iniquitous;—but we fear for the young, the ignorant, those who wish to get rid of the restraints of religion,—those who have not, or will not use the opportunity of taking the antidote along with the poison: long will there be cause for the complaint, “who hath believed our report?” if the mistaken tolerance of the age continue to plead the cause of those whose object it is to stop the ears of men to every voice but the voice of the tempter, and the teaching of the atheist.

So much for avowed and aggressive infidelity; we now notice that which is of a practical nature,—which subsists in the hearts and shews itself in the lives of professors of Christianity. There are numbers who are perfectly satisfied with themselves, if they express on all occasions great regard for religion, and comply with outward observances; but this may consist with a disbelief of the Gospel report, and on the ground admitted on all hands to be good, that a man does not believe, in morals or religion, any thing which does not affect his heart, and materially influence his conduct. Is it possible for any one really to

believe in a changeless state of despair and misery as the consequence of sin,—of rejecting the Gospel and its blessings, and yet take no step whatever, and feel no anxiety to escape a fate so tremendous? Surely not. On the other hand, can any man seriously contemplate, as placed within his reach, after his removal from the present life, felicity the most boundless, satisfying and lasting,—while he deliberately prefers the most perishing, unsubstantial, degrading gratifications to the use of means, whereby he may ensure to himself glory, honour, and immortality?

Again,—can there be a belief in the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of the Highest for sin,—of such a demonstration of its evil and bitterness, that God has in reality, made such a sacrifice,—such an unvarying display of love to ungrateful rebels? and yet can sin be loved, —and yet, is it possible to be every moment insulting that God of matchless mercy?—Surely this is not in human depravity,—we cannot credit this of our nature. There is, then, a want of belief of the whole system, or rather, the mind contents itself with a sort of fancied belief,—dwells not on the ideas, which, if dwelt upon, would prove omnipotent in their influence, would operate on the heart and conduct, impelling us to virtue and religion, as the moving power of a machine impels it to a cer-

tain kind and rate of operation,—would take away from us, in a manner our free agency, leaving us conquered by the love,—slaves to the matchless mercy and most reasonable will of God.

IV. WHAT THEN IS, AFTER ALL, THE GRAND CAUSE WHY OUR ALL-POWERFUL RELIGION HAS REALLY SO LITTLE EFFECT IN THE WORLD?—Why is it, that men can profess it—can even know something of it, while there is a deplorable absence of the results which it ought to produce in their lives? “The arm of the Lord is not revealed.”—And why?—because men make it not the object of their prayers that it should be. The Gospel is powerless without this: men are apt to think that reason is sufficient to be their guide in religion,—forgetting that the fall of our nature has affected with a proneness to mislead, and a manifest inadequacy to sacred subjects, this noblest of our faculties. Reason enables many of us to see that religion is necessary to the well-being of society,—that many of its precepts must be obeyed, if we would be at all happy or respectable,—but it will not, cannot go the length of extending its efficacy to the inner man.—No; a Creator’s arm must new create;—the arm which alone can enter the lists with “principalities and powers,”

must go forth to the combat with the enemies of our souls,—must subdue our corruptions, must remove our prejudices. What, but this mighty agent, can bring down the high thoughts of man to the humility of the Gospel?—can effect the conversion of what is hard as stone into the impressibility of flesh? can loosen the hold of favourite habits—can make us willing to relinquish all, that we may “win Christ, and be found in Him?”

It is not enough to rest in baptismal and other sacramental privileges. High advantages were ours, it is true, when we were borne to the font, and dedicated with prayer and solemn rite to the Lord; but to the fervent prayers then offered, we must add our own earnest petitions for the grace of God to be implanted in our hearts, and we must feel our need of it before “the arm of the Lord will be revealed,”—before we can see and feel the ‘whole divinity’ of our faith. It is thus only that we can overcome the opposition which sin and Satan present to all that is good. The evangelical report can never, with efficiency, enter those abodes in the human heart, which the god of this world has long made his residence, unless accompanied by the might of the arm which, in the days of his flesh, the Son of God put forth in dispossessing many a foul fiend of its dwelling, in the souls

and bodies of men. It must go to the heart *in power*, or it will not go at all,—it will never be other than matter of cold speculation and uninfluential profession. God has expressly revealed to us,—“Without me ye can do nothing,”—has inculcated our dependance upon Him in every particular,—has enjoined us to prayer “in every time of need,” and more especially, when we are experiencing the resistance of the world, the flesh and the devil, to our receiving and acting on the report of the Gospel.

My brethren, this report is still addressed to us, though every year that passes over us takes away a long period from the season of God's mercy and our opportunities of salvation. It is not that the ministers of religion are addressing to you some human system;—it is God that speaks to you by man, on the most tremendously important of all subjects, and what think you must be the consequence, if we persist in refusing to hear? Why, just this,—the voice of mercy will ere long be replaced by the summons to judgment, and the sentence to woe; and do we refuse to see the arm stretched out to save and to guide,—to support in weakness, to snatch from the grave? Hereafter, that arm will be raised in anger, and we must see—must feel it. Though rock upon rock were piled upon us,—though the

wreck of nature covered us, we should still hear, the voice of the Judge,—still feel the arm of the Avenger. Can we think of this and not be tremulously alive to our safety and our happiness,—and not make the theme of every and frequent prayer, the influences of God's Spirit, and His manifestation to our souls in the power of the Gospel?—We are not half aware of the privilege of prayer, if not sensible of this its object and use,—to make the message of the Gospel tidings to us of unspeakable joy and immortal hope, full of comfort to our souls in all the seasons and exigencies of our pilgrimage,—music to our ears in death, prophetic of “joy unutterable and full of glory.”

And to prayer also will “the arm of the Lord be revealed,” while it is veiled in anger, in awful retribution from the eyes of the unbelieving and insensible;—in power, and in sense of abundant safety and encouragement, will it visit the souls of the humble and attentive hearers of the proclamation from heaven to earth; it will be beheld in the glorious triumphs of the Gospel, in former ages, over all opposition, in its majestic march through a hostile world;—it will be looked for and seen in creation and providence,—in the affairs of men in general, and of the Christian himself in particular;—it will point out to him his way, it will scatter before him his foes,—it will

bear him unharmed through the furnace of affliction, and hold up his head above the swelling waters of the stream which must be crossed ere we land on the shore of eternity ;

it will lay him softly in the tomb, — it will burst for him the bars of death, — it will hold out to him the golden sceptre of mercy in the hour of judgment, — will shield him from the shock of dissolving elements, and ward off from him the thunder-bolts flying thick among the workers of iniquity ; — on this arm of his Father's love he shall be borne on high to those abodes where he shall reap the full reward of his faith, and behold the full revelation of all the glories and the blessedness which God has prepared for His obedient children.

SERMON VII.

THE HAPPY DEATH;—AND THE FRUITLESS
WISHES TO WHICH IT GIVES RISE IN THOSE
WHO WILL NOT LEAD A HOLY LIFE.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end
be like his.*

THERE has been not a little difference of opinion among the expounders of Scripture, respecting the extraordinary character whose words have been now read. Some have maintained that he was one of those sorcerers, so common in the early history of the East, who, favoured by the ignorance and credulity of those among whom he lived,—endowed with considerable natural knowledge or deceptive arts, or perhaps aided by some evil spirit,—excited the astonishment and claimed the reverence of mankind by deeds of wonder, and predictions that were verified by events:—others again, have maintained that he was a prophet of the true God, the last gifted minister

of the old patriarchal church,—with whom perished, among the Gentiles, the knowledge and worship of Jehovah that still survived amid the corruptions of the world; in whom the true religion expired, till the star took its station over the manger at Bethlehem and Eastern sages hailed the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

There are many arguments in support of the opinion that Balaam was indeed, an inspired prophet of the living God. St. Peter, in his Second Epistle, distinctly confers on him the title of a prophet; and the circumstances of the history here related, are decidedly in favour of this notion. When Balak's messengers first came to him, he spake the language of one who had the fear of God habitually upon his mind; he disclaimed all power of his own to bless or curse, or take any step in the matter, but under God's express direction and permission; he protested that he must have God's leave to go to the King of Moab, and that when arrived, he must take heed to speak what Jehovah put into his mouth. Although Balak would give him "his house full of silver and gold," he declared that he could not transgress the word of *his* God "to do less or more." This was the language of Balaam in the ordinary state of his mind, when he was under no prophetic impulse; and

it is remarkable that he speaks of God in the same terms that were afterwards in use among the Jewish prophets, "the Lord, *my* God." He speaks of his faculty of prediction in language most exactly expressive of the prophetic gift and the prophetic office; expressive of no singular, unexampled and constraining impulse upon this occasion, as in the opinion of some, but of frequent and habitual intercourse with the Most High God, "by voice and visions, in dream and in trance."

When we think on all these things, we shall have no difficulty in considering Balaam in the venerable character of a divinely inspired prophet. "And when to these circumstances," says the acute and most learned Bishop Horsley, "we add, that he uttered a true prophecy, a prophecy (if I read its meaning aright) extending from his own time to the Messiah's second advent,—a prophecy which, in every part of it that relates to times gone by, hath been fulfilled with wonderful exactness, and in other parts which relate to ages yet to come, harmonizes with the predictions of the Jewish prophets and the Apocalypse,—a prophecy which, for the variety of the composition in its various parts, for the aptness, the beauty, the majesty, the horror of its images, may compare with the most animated effusions of the Hebrew bards;—can a doubt remain that this man,

with all the imperfections of his private character, was a true prophet, though perhaps he might from some unaccountable superstitious feelings, or in accommodation to the notions and practices of the times, blend somewhat of magic with the exercise of his prophetic office?"—There have not been wanting other instances in which the supernatural gifts of heaven have been conferred on irreligious men, and there are, it is to be feared, instances also in the present day, in which the offices of the Christian ministry are effectively exercised and the sacraments efficaciously administered by men on whom Christianity has no power.

The besetting sin of Balaam appears to have been *covetousness*; how long it had ruled in his soul, or whether in the history before us, it first produced its awful effects of exciting him to rebellion against God, it is not material to know. Certain it is, that it urged him to visit the court of Moab on an errand displeasing to God,—that he went in almost direct defiance of the declared will of heaven, and it is also well ascertained from the progress of the history, helped out by some other parts of scripture, that his love of money urged him to give Balak the insidious advice which led the Israelites into idolatry, and caused the plague to rage among their tribes; an advice which failed of accomplishing its full object, and issued in

the miserable and hopeless death of the impious apostate.

But it is to the words, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his !," it is to these emphatic words of the Arabian prophet that our attention must be chiefly directed; they must commend themselves to the minds and the feelings of every one of us; the wish which they breathe, the prayer which they put up, is the wish of every bosom, is the prayer most ready to burst from the lips of every individual.

When he uttered them, Balaam was setting forth in splendid language, the happy and glorious state of Israel, the nation favoured and blessed by the God of all the earth. And in the Israelites he doubtless beheld and felt most deeply the happy state of the righteous in that, and in every age and people. He saw before his prophetic eye, the myriads of God's children, in the future triumphant history of the Church, when "the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth, as the waters do the sea;" he looked on their temporal safety and felicity, he contemplated their happy and hopeful death, he caught a glimpse of their never-ending joys;—and death being the crisis of man's history, no wonder that he pauses and dwells on ~~that~~—and, forgetting the gold to which he had become a slave, and the honours

which Moab's king had promised him,—losing sight of all that the world could offer,—he fixes on the death of the righteous, that scene in which religion is most triumphant, and sums up all his wishes, and puts them into one ardent prayer, “*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*”

His prayer was not heard, because it was not followed up in his life. The Spirit of God, wearied by his worldliness and subsequent impiety, forsook him for ever,—his memory is dishonoured, and his tomb bears the marks of God's avenging justice; there is no hope to illumine and vary the darkness of his fate; we see in him a man highly gifted by God, favoured by intimate converse with divinity, with the soul's immortality clear before his view, holding valuable, in his sober mind, no object in comparison of the favour of God, and the peaceful death that must ever close a life of piety; we have him presented to us in a magnificent and commanding point of view, in the greater part of the history before us,—full of the Spirit of God and of truth,—defying alike, the bribes and the threats of a mighty monarch,—acting fearlessly and steadily on the suggestions of conscience and the demands of duty,—keeping under, his besetting sin, and searching far forward into the days to come, till Messiah arose to his view, and the

life and immortality of the Gospel flashed before his mind, throwing new charms and glories around the death of the righteous. But how soon is the scene changed! I know not what infatuation takes possession of the prophet's soul,—he conspires with Balak the ruin of that people against whom he had declared there was no enchantment and no curse,—whom God had blessed, he strives to visit with a malediction,—he leaves the presence of God, and falls down and worships Mammon,—he sells his soul for the gifts and the honours of Moab,—he resigns the happy death and the rewards of the righteous for the wages of sin; Satan enters and takes possession of the soul that had just been the abode of God's prophetic Spirit,—and next in folly and in infamy to him who sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, must we place the gifted and unhappy Balaam.

But we must cease to wonder at his infatuation or to lament his fate. Let us come down to our own times; are there no Balaams among Christians? Let us ask our own hearts,—is the sin of Balaam or some equivalent sin, not reigning there? Let us look to our own conduct,—is there no one running on greedily in his error, to his appalling fate? The things that happened in the old time, the characters that are recorded in the sacred volume, were

written for our warning, for our learning, for our example. And are there none to whom the history before us reads the lesson of warning?—Would to God that there were none!—The sin of the Eastern prophet is the crying sin of the present day—the ruinous and inexcusable guilt of these times of knowledge and civilization and Christianity—the sin that will warrant the severest doom of which the Scriptures speak—that will heat the furnace of Divine vengeance seventy-times seven. I do not mean the covetousness of Balaam, but the conduct to which it led, the sinning with a perfect knowledge of duty, against conviction, against knowledge, against grace, against the better and nobler and heaven-inspired feelings of the soul.

In further remarking on the text, it is impossible not to observe that *religion presents to every mind something inconceivably convincing and attractive*. Man cannot live without religion, and he is conscious that he needs it;—he estranges himself from God as he may, degrades and pollute himself as he may, let him encourage the animal and strive to press down the immortal principle within him; religious considerations will, in some shape, find access to his soul, and assert their claims to rule his conduct and amend his nature. Apart from God, he is like a being separated from his dignity, his happi-

ness, and his hope;—he feels alone and helpless,—as one incapable of bearing a shock or encountering a foe. We will not speak of other evidences for religion. There is enough within us,—there is enough in every heathen altar and every barbarous rite; enough in the superstition of ignorance and credulity, enough in the impost feelings and universal history of human nature, to tell that religion came from God, and is necessary to man. Look at Christianity, look at ourselves;—God has joined us together, and it is in opposition to our best and most deeply rooted feelings, as well as to the aim of our peace and our prospects, when we sever the union.

Another observation suggests itself. *There is an inseparable association of happiness, dignity, and beauty with the religious life.* How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! said Balaam, when he contemplated the encampment of Israel, and perceived clearly that the Lord God was with them and that the shout of Heaven's King was among them. So will the most wicked and sensual man say, who looks on the goodly deportment of a consistent Christian. There is something magnificent, something that commends itself to our sense of fitness and good order, in the soul rising superior to the body, and holding all the passions and senses in subservience to

some high and heavenly principle. When the soul and the judgment are enthroned in the little empire of man, and that soul is new-created after the Divine image, and that judgment is enlightened by divine truth, and Christianity is the presiding genius of the empire—is the code of laws by which it is ruled, and

Scripture doctrines and precepts form the members of the council; how goodly, how reasonable, how admirable is the character that

it! The blush of shame is on the cheek of the sinner—the brow of him who is regulated by Christian principles, is unruffled and unabashed. The paleness of fear is the ensign of guilt,—an approving conscience and the favour of heaven take from the good man all fear but the fear of sin. The intemperate man is a slave to the basest qualities of his nature; vice has effaced the Divine likeness, and worn away the mark of immortality which God placed on his forehead; there is no dignity in his deportment, he is a grovelling slave; there is no beauty in his character and conduct, unless there be beauty in the sordid love of money, or gracefulness in the excesses of the reveller, unless there be attractiveness in falsehood and fraud, and elegance in lust and wantonness. Safety and he cannot associate, he stands on the verge of ruin, on the brink of hell,—or religion is a mockery and a tale.

But, viewed as it respects this life alone, suppose there is no truth in revelation, and no promise to piety, is it not a fine and enviable character, that of the man who *will not* sin though no eye should detect, and no penalty should follow,—who *will not* violate the laws of justice and morality, for any gain or any pleasure, who prefers integrity to life, and innocence to an empire? Let men say what they will, this is the character which must draw the love and admiration of every heart, which opens the way to true peace, safety, and enjoyment, which is of incomparable value to possess though death closed our history;—the unprompted voice of every human being must at once wish for himself that he may live the life of the righteous.

* But further: it is *the death of the righteous* to which the text principally calls our attention. The thought of death is the talisman by which reflexion^{ment} and soberness are sure to gain access to every breast. It is the tamer of unruly passions, it summons the soul to “commune with itself and be still.” It is by taking counsel of death that we can form a correct opinion of the world, of ourselves, and of religion. In solitude he is likely to present himself to our minds—and what is the result?—“Let me die the death of the righteous.” In sickness he comes nearer to us, and what is the

effect of his approach!—The ardent desire that the last end of the righteous may be ours. Danger will bring the most irreligious man to his knees, and teach the lips of the blasphemer to pray, and the prayer will be “let me die the death of the righteous.”—it brought the infidel Volney to a recantation of his unbelief, and made him a convert to religion, till the winds were hushed, and the sea on which he had been tossed, became calm.

The death of the righteous, as was remarked of his life, would be an object of desire, though death dropped the curtain for ever, on his history. It would be a worthy object of our wishes, even on such a supposition, to die gracefully and in peace. “But thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!” “We know that when this earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The righteous ^{is} ~~are~~ in his death; a hope that bears ^{on} ~~and there is~~ ^{an} ~~ever~~ ^{ing} hour, and embalms ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} world. It is at the death of the ^{religious} ~~religious~~ life is respectable, cures immortal, ^{lost} ~~lost~~ free from risk and care,—but he shall awake, ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ apprehended by many, that ^{life} ~~life~~ is the most, is the *only* happy to rest; and ^{they} ~~they~~ They understand not its ^{due} ~~due~~ time, roll ^{now} ~~now~~ nothing truly of religion: if ^{he} ~~he~~ dies.

ness, to imperfection, to sorrow and sighing, — casts away all that is encumbering and impure; faith and hope are the attendants on his bed of sickness, and death lifts the veil which severed him from his God, and breaks down the barriers between him and his accomplished blessedness.

Through that veil we cannot pierce, nor break through those barriers, to tell what awaits him; — suffice it to say, that his last end, that his reward, is all that man is longing for — is the possession of that indefinite something for which the most prosperous and happiest sigh — is the full accomplishment of every wish, the realization of every hope, the performance of every precious promise.

No wonder then that men long for this termination of their career, — that, at the inmate of every sick bed, the prayer is, "Let me die the death of the righteous," — that persons who cared nothing for religion during life, in the fear of every breath, the minister of religion, on passions, it summons in that sacrament mune with itself and be still prove a passport counsel of death that we can, righteous. opinion of the world, of ourselves beings to live ligious. In solitude he is likely to y may be to self to our minds — and what is tature, neither "Let me die the death of the righteous companion for a sickness he comes nearer to us, an must be tinc-

tured by some faint hope of a blessed immortality, ere the trembling mortal dare raise it to his lips.

Whence, then, comes the strange infatuation which will permit a man, while he appreciates the peaceful death of the pious, to persist in the ways and the practices which he knows cannot lead to so delightful a close of life?—that he desires to die a saint, but will not live one? An unrenewed nature is at the root of the evil;—there is, too, some besetting sin, such as the covetousness of Balsam;—there is some dominant passion, the love of pleasure and of the world;—there is some lurking deceit, or some fatal purpose of delaying practical godliness to a future period. These are the real *selfish* which stifle conviction, which permit *mean* indulgence in known sin and carelessness, which *end* in a hopeless death-bed.

And this conduct proceeds on a most mistaken principle, an idea that there are *real enjoyments* in sinful indulgence, and that a good portion may be found in the world. It is admitted that a religious life is respectable, *lovely*, and most free from risk and care;—but it is not distinctly apprehended by many, that a religious life is the most, is the *only* happy one—and why? They understand not its nature, they know nothing truly of religion: if

they look at it at all, it is with the eye of sense ; they read not the Scriptures regularly or carefully ; they pray not habitually and fervently ; they forsake, or do not rightly avail themselves of the ordinances of religion ;—therefore they feel not that it is a part,—that it is the essence of earthly happiness,—that it is the prelude to heavenly joys, to live religiously : they never dream that heaven could not have charms for them, feeling and thinking as they do ; they have a fixed sentiment that religion is, in some way, necessary to them, must at least smoothe their passage from time to eternity ; they thus give a testimony in favour of religion, and, if they die without its hopes, die self-convicted and inexcusable. They expect that the best gifts of God are to come to them without their seeking, that they are to be made happy, as if by magic, and forget that the only training for a happy death is a holy life ; that God works by means, that without His grace we shall never so receive and understand religion as to love it ;—as to see in virtue itself, our happiness—and in holiness, the principle of peace and immortality ; and that prayer will procure this grace, and religion is to be learned from Scripture, explained by the Spirit who inspired it ;—that it is a process, and not a charm, a protracted work, and not the result of a moment :—that it will not open its treasures to a

wish, however ardent, nor to a prayer, however sincere, unless the wish and the prayer issue in energy and in action.

If I mistake not, much that has been said, will not be found very foreign to the characters and cases of some among us. If it be so, do not thrust the subject from you, till it has done its work. In one point we are all agreed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end, let my reward, be like his!" Let us agree also in the *way* that leads to this result, and fixing our eyes on the example, and regulating our lives by the precepts of Jesus Christ, let us journey towards the tombs which His death and resurrection have transmuted into beds of peaceful rest and immortal hope:

SERMON VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S REMEDY FOR DISQUILIBRIUM
AND ANXIETY.

PETER v. 7.

*Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth
for you.*

IT is not possible that I can address one who requires to have explained to him what is meant by care. I am as certain as if I knew the secrets of every heart that beats,—as if I were intimately acquainted with the affairs and situation and interests of every one around me, that care is, more or less, the inmate of every bosom;—that however serene the countenance may appear, however much peacefulness and gaiety may occasionally characterise the inward feelings, anxiety is the sensation with which we are most familiar,—with which the smoothest brow is not unfrequently wrinkled, and the lightest heart checked in its mirthful-

ness. It would be well indeed, if, during the hours spent in the devotions of the sanctuary, no one had to reproach himself with having suffered the cares of the world to follow him to the house of God, and to harass the mind, which ought to be disturbed by nothing but a sense of guilt and unworthiness,—it would be well, if, during the passing moments that are devoted to such occupations, we cared for nothing but *the one thing needful*.

Perplexing, surely, must be the embarrassments and pressing the anxieties which we allow to intrude on the season of sacred rest,—which we permit to interfere with our hallowing the sabbath day,—and it is admitted—(though not as a sufficient apology for such intrusion of earthly upon heavenly concerns)—it is admitted that life is so fruitful in matter of care,—that there are ^{so} many circumstances relating to our own temporal interests, or the interests of those for whom we feel deeply anxious, as to leave to the man of prudence and of thought, few intervals in which he may rest from the toils of activity or reflexion. It would be pleasing indeed, to light upon any scheme for lessening our anxieties—for affording rest and respite from perplexing cares,—for enabling us to labour, (as labour we must) in good hope,—for permitting us, when we have devised and done our best, to repose all our interests

on an All-wise Counsellor, and an Almighty Friend. It would be delightful and refreshing, to him who finds it difficult to provide for himself and those dependent on him, having done what he could, in safety to consign all over to One, who has promised his efficacious blessings to honest and persevering efforts.—How consolatory would it be to him whose innocence is assailed by the breath of calumny, —whose dearest friends are suffering under disease or sinking in death, to be able to commit his reputation to a keeping, in which it could not fail of being safe, and to consign his friends, when affection and care have done their part, to a matchless Physician, who either could heal them, or, else close the wounds which their loss must inflict on his heart? It would be, surely, abundant matter of consolation to us all, waiting as we are the stroke of death, —uncertain when, or how we may visit us, and deeply anxious as we are to the change to which he introduces us, to have a friend, who even in death could aid, and will not desert us.

To have all these resources—all these soothers of care, and comforts in suffering, would be to all of us, most desirable;—we all feel how much our peace would be promoted and our anxieties lessened by the assurance of such helps in the time of our need. Possessing such, life would be divested of many of its sor-

rows, the heart relieved from much of its uneasiness.—But do they exist,—are they to be found—can they be made out?—They are offered to us in the exhortation of our text,—we have only to comply with its directions, to cast all our care upon the Lord, and our cares will be lightened and our sorrows soothed by being intrusted to the God of providence and of consolation.

We have hitherto glanced almost entirely at earthly subjects of anxious thought,—we have seen that it would be hailed as a most delightful acquisition to gain relief from the pressure of these. Man has higher and deeper anxieties,—thoughts of heavier import, concerns of eternal interest,—and when he comes to think as he ought, of these, care must indeed ruffle his brow, and ^{when} peace be a stranger to his soul, till he attains, on ^{one} ~~the~~ ^{these} momentous points, information that is satisfactory and hope that will not deceive. Human wisdom, ~~and~~ ^{and} effort, and patience, may perhaps claim, with ~~some~~ ^{some} plausibility, to be sufficient for human, ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~con~~ ^{con} mere earthly cares; but when death and judgment and eternity array themselves with all their dread accompaniments before the soul, and demand of it provision and fitness to meet them, the devices and the resources, and the patient endurance, and the high heroism of the wisest head and the stoutest heart, are

found to be inadequate to the work. When the mortal thinks, how he shall meet death with calmness, and conquer in his last conflict with the last foe,—when the guilty are anxious to learn how they may appear at the bar and stand in the judgment,—when even the temptations and the snares of least formidable character to which the spiritual nature is exposed, are taken into account,—when the ordinary encumbrances are considered, with which the Christian warrior has to contend, it is quite obvious that the exhausted mind must sink, and the unseconded energies be wholly inefficacious, before the trials and the hindrances of a religious life and the terrors of a dying hour.

O then for arms equal to warfare with the enemies of our souls,—for strength adequate to the combat,—for patience under trial and calamity, under temptation,—for support and victory in our last conflict with the king of terrors,—for triumph in the day of reckoning!—Who that forms the wish may not have it?—Who that breathes the prayer, may not obtain himself that it is not preferred in vain?—What says the Scripture?—“Cast thy burden on the Lord”—what says our text?—“Cast your care on him”—and then what can remain to trouble you?—and then, what trial can come for which you are unprepared?—and then what foe shall gain the advantage over

you? Why then, need death alarm and judgment overwhelm you with its terrors? "Cast all your care upon Him," in submission to His appointments; think not that you can manage things, even for this present life, best for yourself; rely on His wisdom,—in His goodness,—submit to his authority. "Cast all your care upon Him," in firm faith, in dependence on Almighty power,—let not distrust invade your heart and mar your comforts and offend your God. Go to His Mercy-seat in prayer in the Saviour's name,—pour out to Him your anxieties, your sorrows, your difficulties, your temptations, weaknesses, your fears—thus, in the confidence of communion with your heavenly Father, "Cast all your care upon Him,"—leave nothing untold,—reserve nothing to your own management.

Is there one, who, after this full and free invitation, will, either through pride and self-conceit of his powers, resolve to rest on himself, rather than forego and, or through mere carelessness and inattention, neglect to avail himself of the offered help?—let him not complain if his heart be often troubled and afraid,—if his affairs go wrong, and his prospects seem discouraging—he has himself to blame. O let us, my brethren, embrace so kind an offer,—avail ourselves of so sweet a refuge from anxiety and care as the Apostle bids

out to us. It is surely no deep humiliation to acknowledge that we cannot do without the aid of our Creator—any thing but dishonour to have him for an auxiliary in the work we have to do. Let us not drown care in reckless dissipation, nor get rid of it in thoughtlessness;—let us look it full in the face,—gather it all up, and cast it upon our God,—commit all our temporal interests to the God of Providence, all our spiritual affairs to the God of grace,—we may do so in the assurance that He careth, that He will ever care for us.

I am aware that there are presumptuous, unbelieving men, who, affecting to know more of God than those who are taught by that revelation which is indisputably divine, are ready to assert that we are objects of little concern to the Almighty,—that He is too high and too holy to concern himself with the earthly and the sinful,—that as our happiness could add nothing to His bliss, so our ruin can call neither for His compassion nor His interposition. We combat not objections like these, nor would they have been mentioned, but that persons of every different description may sometimes entertain ideas, somewhat akin to those just stated. The humble and the penitent,—they, who have the most exalted notions of Him who dwelleth in the heavens,—who deeply feel their own comparative insig-

nificance and their ill deserts, may, in the hour of unbelief, or rather of weak faith, doubt whether the King eternal, immortal and invisible, really takes so great an interest in them, as once they were led to believe?—It is indeed marvellous, (if, in man, any inconsistency or folly can be marvellous) that, in the face of Scripture and reason and experience, such a doubt should ever occur;—that it should ever for a moment be questioned that the Creator cares for His creatures,—the Sovereign for His subjects, the Father for His children? It might be thought that we scarcely needed the assurance in the text, -- for, let us look around us;—what is there for which God does not care? --Who is it that decks the flower of the field with its beauty,-- that gilds the slender form and provides for the wants of the most inconsiderable insect,--without whom, not even a sparrow falls to the ground?—Doth He take care for these,—for the inanimate and irrational parts of his creation, and can He be indifferent to the happiness and to the wants of His rational and immortal creatures, who wear somewhat of His own image, and to whom is vouchsafed the knowledge of the great Lord of all? What are the bounties of providence but marks that he cares for us?—what intelligence bring to us the rising of every morning's sun, the closing in of the silent evening,—the

food that nourishes, and the raiment that clothes us,—every breath we draw, and every joy of which we taste?—what intelligence do these convey, but that God careth for us?—takes so deep an interest in us as to bless our human means, and so arrange the order of things, that a rich supply is perpetually afforded to every want?

But let us go to the sacred record, and there learn how God cares for us. What has He not done to repair the ruins of the Fall:— what directions has he not given for our reformation? Has He not sent prophets and apostles, wrought signs and wonders,—spoken from heaven, and held intercourse with mankind? But go to Bethlehem and to Calvary, — through all the intermediate stages of the great work which tells how 'God cares for us, to have all doubts for ever banished and unbelief for ever shamed. The manger and the cross surely are competent witnesses on this subject: and what is their language but this, —*God so loved the world, as to send His own Son* to redeem it by His humiliation and death, —His own Spirit to renew and hallow our corrupted natures. • After this, let no one suppose that God cares not for him,—let no one pretend, by an affectation of humility, to excuse his inattention to religion, his want of confidence in

his Maker,—to cover, under the name of one of the first of virtues, his aversion from all intercourse with that Being, who, while he is ready to care for the penitent, will have no communion with him who loves and practises sin. It is then, no fiction of romance, no dream of fancy, no fond imagination, that to the Great Jehovah we are objects of regard. Be assured of the fact, that “God careth for you,” and let this be the grand argument with us all, for “casting our care upon Him.” It is, in the general course of His providence, His wish and the result of His dealings with us, that we should be happy in this life,—that we should enjoy its comforts, its competence, at least, its necessities;—that we should be happy in our friendships, and prosperous in all our affairs; and when the reverse is the case, it is still true that “God careth for us,” and the afflictions and the trials which He sends, serve, in not a few instances, more fully to prove the deep interest He takes in us,—for “whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth,”—whom He would raise to future glory and honour, He sees it necessary, when other means fail, to visit with that severe discipline which is meant to lead to the paths of virtue and of wisdom.

But whatever be His dealings with any, He careth so much for all, as to afford them, in various proportions, the means by which they

may secure eternal life. He will, therefore, so take charge of the affairs of all who put their confidence in Him, that no temptation shall meet them, above their capacity to bear,—no foe shall assail them, over whom they may not obtain a victory,—no sorrow shall come upon them, to which a suitable consolation is not presented. He will so care for them in time, that all things necessary for them in their journey towards eternity, shall be their's, and so manage their spiritual interests, that their reward and happiness shall be sure.

By casting all our care upon God, my brethren, we shall escape much distressing anxiety;—while the irreligious, the self-confident, those who would fain be independent of their Maker, are torn with corroding care, ours will be the consciousness, that our cause—that our happiness are in good hands,—in the management of One, to whom our felicity is important, and who possesses every requisite for securing it. Our own weakness, the uncertainties of time and accident need not distress us; He is mighty. He is unchangeable, to whom we have committed all our interests.

Thus too, shall we erect a barrier against sin, for we can commit to a holy God, the care of no undertaking, the accomplishment of no desire, that is not in accordance with our duty; we cannot pray that He will bless us in that

which is calculated to dishonour Him, and inflict a curse on us:—it will be a good test by which to try the propriety of any wish we form,—any object we have in view, to inquire, can we, in this, cast all our care upon God?

Thus, finally, shall we feel certain that all things will issue in our good. He who undertakes our cause, pledges himself to bring it to a happy close; He cannot fail in His word, nor be disappointed in His purpose; and while those who pursue a different conduct, will be ever lamenting the failure of their hopes and their confidences, we shall feel secure, that, be the present aspect of events what it may, there is good in store for us,—though the clouds may be round about, there is a clear sky above them,—though weeping may be allotted during the night of life, joy shall assuredly, (if not before) be ours in that morning, of which the sun shall never go down.

How vast then the importance—now indispensable the necessity of religion, which alone can lead us to God! Do we wish that great and holy Being to honour us by taking all our affairs into His keeping?—We must have recourse to Him in the way that He hath pointed out. He will not seek us, if we are continually

studious to avoid Him,—He will not care for them, whose entire conduct shews, that in spite of all His warnings and advices, they are determined not to take any care for themselves.

I close not this subject, merely with the obvious recommendation, for those who are anxious about their eternal welfare, to have recourse to religion, and thus cast all their concerns for another world upon Him, to whom alone they can be safely committed; but I ask also, whether any one present, labouring under the ordinary pressures of life,—who' has experienced its disappointments,—whose future path is any thing but clear before him,—whose prospects far from cheering,—all whose thoughts are full of the cares how he shall extricate himself from embarrassment,—bring any undertaking to a favourable result,—avoid any threatened calamity,—secure any uncertain good?—He must still have recourse to religion,—by the means recommended in the Scriptures of Truth, reconcile himself (if he have not done so before,) to God, and henceforth impart all his sorrows, all his anxieties to Him, cast upon Him, all his care: so shall he find, in the way, meet for his advantage, that "God careth for him,"—so shall his sorrows be sweetened by the consolations which heaven

can impart;—soon shall either his troubles be removed, or materially alleviated;—soon shall he have abundant reason to confess that “they who trust in the Lord and do good”—they “who await on Him and keep His way, shall finally have the desires of their hearts.”

SERMON IX.

GENERAL RULE FOR CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.

COLOSSIANS iii. 17.

"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by Him."

THE object which the Apostle had in view in these words, and indeed for which he framed this epistle, was the correction of certain errors into which the Colossians were in danger of falling, from the conceits of philosophical, and the old prejudices and attachments of Judaizing teachers;—the former of whom urged upon them the necessity of propitiating angels, as mediators between God and them,—and the latter, an observance of the abrogated Mosaic rites. The Apostle, on the other hand, exhorts them to have recourse solely to the only "Mediator" between God and man," and to follow the example, and obey the precepts of their Saviour. In the words that

have been read, he furnishes a general and most important rule for the conduct of Christians in all ages and circumstances ;—a rule, which we shall do well to examine, and to inquire how far our conduct is in accordance with it.

I. Let us endeavour, then, first, to ascertain WHAT IS COMPREHENDED IN THE INJUNCTION, “ do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Obviously, in general, the regulation of our conduct, with a view to His approbation, is intended. We must, therefore, obey His commands, we must walk in His footsteps : submit ourselves to His will, as proclaimed in His word, illustrated by His example. And this we do, when we follow our lawful occupations, because He has enjoined us to “ provide things honestly, in the sight of all men,” —to make provision “ for our own, especially those of our own house : ” —this we do, when we enjoy the comforts of life which He has afforded us, with a perception of their source in the Divine goodness ; and when we minister to the wants of the poor, sympathize with the unfortunate, and comfort, so far as we are able, “ all that mourn,” because the Saviour has commanded us “ to love our neighbour as ourselves ; ” when we refrain from sin, because

we know He hates it, deny ourselves, and resist strong temptations to that which He has forbidden, when we bear adversity with patience and submission, we make the approbation of our Lord the object of our actions and behaviour, we offer up an acceptable sacrifice of obedience to One, who best deserves our services. To sum up all,—the exhortation of the text requires of those who “name the name of Christ,” not only “to depart from all evil,” but, in whatsoever they do, or say, or think, to bear Him in mind, to have regard to His authority, to keep in view, as the grand object and result, His approval. in fact, to do all things “as unto the Lord, and not unto men.”

More particularly ;—“doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus” implies having a desire to promote His glory ; “whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,”—“glorify Him in your bodies and your spirits, which are His.” Man was created for the glory of Him, who “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life :” ---he fell from the perfection in which, and the capacities with which, he was at first endowed ; and was redeemed, that he might be again enabled to answer the end of his creation. What then, are we, who call ourselves Christians, required to do, but to live, in all

respects, to the honour of the Saviour's name, and doctrine?—to beware of speaking a word, cherishing a thought, allowing ourselves in any conduct that would bring reproach through our inconsistent deportment, on the name we bear? Sin has for its object His dishonour, gratifies His great foe,—and our souls' inveterate enemy; we must avoid, then, any approach to it. On the other hand, conformity to His image, increase in holiness, growth in grace, heavenly affections, obviously tend to His glory, who hath “called us with an holy calling.”—There is no duty, of whatever nature, rightly performed, but glory accrues to Him who commanded it; no sinful affection mortified, no temptation resisted, no advance made in the Christian course, no victory gained in our warfare with “principalities and powers,” no sincere and manly profession made of our faith, no respect paid to the dictates of conscience,—in fact, there is no part of conduct becoming a Christian, that does not in some way subserve to the glory of our Creator and Redeemer. Let us, therefore, according to this rule, which, it is hoped, the above remarks go to establish, each of us endeavour, as the Apostle exhorts us, “to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

But further still;—it is more especially in the matters of religion, in the things pertain-

ing to our salvation, that we can most decidedly speak, and think, and act, with a view to the approbation of our Lord and Saviour; it is in these respects that we can chiefly set before us, as our aim, the promotion of His glory. In His name, we must, in regard to these matters, do all, or we shall do nothing well, nothing effectually. In His name must we pray, to Him must ascend our praises, our giving thanks to God the Father, must be by Him,—all the exercises of devotion must lead to Him; without Him, we cannot worship God aright,—without Him, how dare we venture to approach the Divine presence? —To Him, must we ascribe all the glory of our salvation, since “there is none other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved, But the name of Jesus.”

II. Having thus very briefly stated what is comprehended under the idea of “doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” we proceed to notice, what is of very great importance, THE UNIVERSAL APPLICATION OF THE TERMS IN THE TEXT, TO THE ENTIRE CONDUCT OF CHRISTIANS; “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of your Lord and Master.”

Now here is a general rule, a most comprehensive principle; *Whatsoever ye do*; as much

as to say,—do nothing in fact, that ye cannot engage in with the consciousness that ye have the approval, and are obeying the commands of the “ Lord Jesus.” This injunction at once forbids every thing immoral, every thing obviously vicious, from forming any part of the conduct of Christians ; but does it go no farther ? does it not command us to abstain from many things that are of a doubtful nature and tendency ; from opinions and practices even which may have the sanction of the world and its fashions ?

Here is a great cause of the aversion which many feel to the spirit of our holy religion ;—here is something at which thousands take offence, and “ go away, and walk no more with Jesus ;” there is much which the Gospel calls upon us to renounce, which the heart of man is most unwilling, in many instances, to surrender, —consequently the favourite propensities, and gratifications of our corrupt nature, are cherished and enjoyed, while that uncompromising censor to the sensual and the worldly, the religion of Jesus, is dismissed almost unheard.

The great rule of the Christian's life, now under consideration, permits and exhorts him to engage, to every necessary extent, in the things of the world ; but still with the spirit of a follower of the Saviour. The business and

the gains of time must not absorb the chief attention,—and there must be the most scrupulous regard paid to honour, properly so called, and fairness in the dealings of life; he may enjoy too, the bounties of Providence, but there are sources of gratification, not uncommon, not unpopular in the world, from which he cannot, he dare not seek enjoyment. While he is not required to assume that morose character which contemptuously says to pleasure and relaxation, under every shape, “stand aside;” there are delights, there are relaxations, there are amusements, with regard to which the question arises, ‘are they innocent, are they consistent with a profession of Christianity? All are not so, or else the wise and the good have widely mistaken,—Jesus Christ and His disciples have given many useless precepts and warnings. Are there not scenes of worldly pleasure,—amusements, in themselves perhaps originally harmless, which, by abuse, have become, and are constantly liable to become, such as virtue cannot witness without a blush, nor religion contemplate without horror? Are there not relaxations which loosen every good principle, destroy every virtuous habit? are there not festive meetings and societies, not yet held in their merited disrepute by the unthinking and unwary, in which sometimes even with shameless openness, the best,

the noblest subjects and characters call forth the noisy laughter of the fool, and furnish materials for the poor wit of the unbelieving scorner? whence flow, in deluging streams, the sources of moral pollution and of misery, through all the gradations of society? We abhor probably, and deprecate such excesses as these,—but the rule of our text requires us to beware of seemingly innocent beginnings, which lead to so much crime and such utter ruin. Wherever amusement is engaged in to the neglect of duty, or produces on the mind an aversion from what is serious and important,—when relaxation and festivity are marked by dissipation, and even verge on immorality, then, whatsoever names they assume, whatsoever pretences may be urged in their favour, they are altogether inconsistent with Christianity, and at variance with the exhortation in the text. If we profess Christianity, it becomes us ever to bear in mind *what* we profess, what it requires of us, what it is to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;” let us mark those practices, of whatsoever nature, which attach us too much to this scene of our pilgrimage, which render us unfit for the duties of religion, engaging in which, we cannot seek the direction and blessing of our Father in heaven, and shun them, as hurtful to our best interests, and dishonourable to the Master whom we

profess to serve. Let us engage in nothing which, whatever *we* may think of it, has a tendency to injure *others*, on whom our example might produce a bad effect,—nothing which may wound the consciences and hurt the minds of persons, weaker and more sensitive than ourselves; and all this, because so our Lord has commanded us to regulate our conduct; so shall we be doing, in these respects, “all things in His name.”

And if any should ridicule, should take offence at us for acting upon these principles, let us remember that the world derided and hated Him whom we serve, long before it shewed its enmity to us, and that in our case, as in His, it will do so without a cause.

‘ III. Let us inquire now, WHETHER THE CONDUCT WHICH HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AND RECOMMENDED, BE COMMON AMONG MANKIND, ESPECIALLY WHETHER THEY BE CHARACTERISTIC OF OURSELVES; IN THOUGHT, WORD, AND DEED?

Is the grand and moving principle of the world, to, “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,”—all, with a view to His approbation, to the promotion of His glory, in obedience to His commands? Well would it be if it were so. We fear there is much done in another name, and in another service,—much which

implies,—which at once proves that the holy Jesus can have no part, no lot in the matter. . Could we penetrate the thoughts of men, is there any probability of our finding them under the regulation of the principle of our text? Do the words which we hear, the converse which goes on around us, bear testimony to a regard for the Divine authority and inspection? Do the scenes of business, the haunts of pleasure, exhibit any thing of a due conformity to the grand standard of Christian conduct? Are men striving to please God, or themselves, the Saviour of their souls, or some earthly patron,

acting on the dictates of the Gospel, and in the name of Jesus, or according to the maxims of worldly wisdom, the suggestions of earthly affection, with a view to temporal aggrandisement, and sensual gratification? We fear, that the answers to these questions, if fairly given, must be of an unfavourable nature.-- And, with regard to religion, what is the state of feeling and practice, viewed in relation to the exhortation we are considering? Is it in general characterized by that reality which reminds us of its Author, distinguished by the spirit which tells us aught of Jesus Christ?—is there, even with respect to the article of redemption, that entire, unqualified dependance on Him, without which nothing can be done in His name? We fear not. How much of that

pride is there, which disposes men to flatter themselves with the notion, that they can, of themselves, work out their own salvation?—while the Saviour is kept out of view, receives not His due of gratitude, His meed of praise, that entireness of devotion, to which the amazing work of redemption gives Him such indubitable claims! It is this bad principle which leads some, rather than give up their pretensions to merit, to rob the Son of God of His name and His glory; to reduce Him, in their creed, to the rank of an angel, or a mere man. And if particulars like any of the above be characteristic of the practices and sentiments of many in the world, how little do we find of conformity to the rule, “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” But the chief question respects ourselves. Is our deportment influenced by the apostolic exhortation now under review, are we doing all in the name which we profess to love and venerate? Do we engage in no undertaking without examining its accordance with His will, and our duty,—without imploring His blessing and direction; are our thoughts regulated by a regard to His knowledge of them, our words and deeds with a view to conformity to His image, and obedience to His precepts? With regard to the pride which would exclude Him from His glory, and our whole love, gratitude, and de-

pendance in the work of salvation, let us examine if we are sufficiently careful to avoid it; we shall always, I trust, each of us, use the language, "My soul, come not thou into their secret; to their assembly, mine honour be not thou united," in relation to those who cherish, to such an extent, this unhallowed passion; as to be guilty of the horrible impiety which flows from it.

Let it be henceforth our desire and aim to do all in the way which becomes Christians, for the credit of our religion, and the honour of our Master. There are many and powerful inducements for us, if we never acted upon the principle of the text before, to begin, in the strength of God, to do so now, for, first—how reasonable is the service which is required from us! The very language of the exhortation, suggests most forcibly this argument for our obedience. It is Christ, in whose name, we are to do all things,—He is our Lord,—duty demands that we "do all in His name."

He is our Saviour,—and is there any service He can require which hearts duly impressed with the blessings of redemption can refuse? He created us,—and surely that is claim enough on our compliance with His requisitions.—He redeemed us, and the obligation becomes greater than language can express. Without the last crowning blessing, creation

would have been a curse, existence misery, -- but followed up by the renovation of our fallen nature, how shall we excuse ourselves if we do not all to His glory who shewed Himself our friend, "when there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save?" Can we ever think on His leaving the abodes of holiness and bliss, to sojourn in the likeness of sinful flesh, in a world which rejected and crucified Him; can we think of the cross and the sepulchre, the pains which purchased our blessedness, the death which secured our life, the gifts of the Spirit of sanctification; the bestowment of grace, and heavenly aids, -- and not conclude that it is a most "reasonable service to do all things whatsoever we do, in word or deed, in His name," in accordance with His will?

Moreover, is not the conduct recommended by the Apostle, most honourable, -- conferring on those who pursue it, the only true worth and dignity? It is not for a moment imagined, that any of us can be, as some are, ashamed of the name in which we were baptized;

As the stars are named after him,

Let nothing blush to wear her star."

What honour must we not derive from connexion with Him, from lives regulated by His example, and His word. -- We think much of

'connexion with the great men of earth—what eagerness is manifested to follow even in the train of princes, and of nobles!—and what shall we not think of that glorious name by which Christians are called!—that of “the eternal God, the everlasting Father, the King eternal, immortal and invisible!” What higher name can we give as authority for our conduct? Let others follow the maxims and fashions of the world—let others glory in following those whom false judgments and perverted tastes may deem the most illustrious, we have employed our reasoning powers to little purpose, ~~made~~ but an indifferent use of our means of religious knowledge and heavenly wisdom, if we do not feel assured, if we do not act upon the assurance, that however little pretension a man may have to earthly rank, to the distinctions conferred by wealth and honour, he becomes, in following the Lord Jesus, more honoured than earth could make him, more distinguished than the monarchs and nobles in which he glories.

Lastly,--it will be ~~the~~ best, the only means of securing our safety and happiness to follow the advice of the Apostle, and “do all in the name of our blessed Lord.”

In endeavouring to secure the approbation of men, we may be unsuccessful,—earthly

patrons too, are not famed for steady attachments,—their favour may be lost at one time by the means which were, at another, successfully employed to procure it; but they who attach themselves to the Saviour, and act upon the principles of His religion, are sure of accomplishing their object, in securing His friendship for time and eternity. He will never forsake, never relax in His good offices to, nor become weary, of His faithful servants. Those who attach themselves to philosophical leaders too, to the formers of systems, how distinguished soever such leaders may be, are liable to be betrayed into error and folly, as they who follow the banners of commanders of military renown may be led by them to defeat and death: but they who learn in the school of Jesus, will acquire the true wisdom;—they who walk in His footsteps will go safely and happily.—will avoid sin and its consequent misery. And His name likewise will avail them when all human resource is fled,—it will afford joy in every season of sorrow, a balm in every hour of affliction: it will cheer and support in nature's last struggle,—it will be remembered with triumph in the day when God shall judge the world; the mention of it will insure the acquittal of those who have steadily borne it in mind during their earthly career;—will cause the gates of the eternal city to open,

and prove a passport to the mansions which the Saviour holds in readiness for His faithful disciples.

Let us, my brethren, making use of this name,* at the throne of grace, implore of our heavenly Father, that He would bestow on us the disposition and ability, while we live in this world, to live "not unto ourselves, but unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

SERMON X.

FAITH'S RETROSPECT.

HEBREWS x. 32.

Call to remembrance the former days.

THERE is a striking feature of difference between our religion, and systems of superstition and falsehood. The origin of these latter has always in it something discreditable, something which courts and requires concealment. Pride, licentiousness, or error, presided at their birth; and the veil of the sanctuary, and the craft of the priesthood, have been employed to conceal the disgraceful, the polluted source whence those rites and dogmas sprang, by which they cheated and made a gain of mankind. Pompous ceremonies, and much mysticism have always characterized the systems of man's device:—men have been taught to look to the splendour of the one and the sacredness of the other,—but the polite im-

postors who administered the rites and guarded the secrets, were always anxious to envelope in fables, the truth—which would have destroyed their influence and interests,—which would have shewn that the gods whose worship they conducted, were originally men of tyrannical and impure habits; that the mysteries and the doctrines of their religion had their real source in error or abomination. They could never, in honesty and in safety, exhort their disciples to “call to remembrance the former days,” to go back to the history and rudiments of their faith for confirmation of their belief, for encouragement in virtue, for comfort in suffering.

But with regard to Christianity, from its first rise in Eden at man's fall, through all the details and steps of its progress, we can triumphantly say with the Apostle, “call to remembrance the former days,”—we can challenge inquiry, and court examination: the believer will receive new conviction, the infidel will see the fallacy and folly of his objections, the more extensively he inquires,—the more strictly he examines. The former ages of the Church are the days of its divinity, its glory, its sanctity, its fervour, its devotion, its strict discipline, its noble examples. Let us look back, then, to those times, in which, (speaking comparatively,) she was, in

truth, "without spot or wrinkle;" when she reckoned only saints among the number of her children,—when her weakest and meanest disciple was more strong and more dignified than all the grandeur and all the might of idolatry and persecution. When, from among the simple and uninformed, of her sons, arose those sages and heroes, which the philosophy of heathenism had only been able to imagine or look for. When in adversity and depression, her glory and the virtues of her disciples then shone the brightest, and when seemingly prostrate beneath the feet of the persecutor, she was a spectacle worthy the admiration of angels and of men.

Let us revert to the origin of our religion, we shall return from the inspection of its divine source with deeper veneration, and, it is hoped, with strengthened resolutions to live in conformity to its spirit and demands. It springs from that great Being from whom all that is, derived its existence; and, if man was stamped with the Divine image,—if all things, on their completion, were pronounced "very good,"—surely that system which was to restore in man the Divine resemblance he forfeited by sin, to create him anew, and to form a new heaven and a new earth instead of those which had been blighted and polluted as the scene of human apostacy and corruption,

was altogether god-like,—was most especially good.

In the early history of the Church, we find the Deity, the active, visible teacher of religion to our race; with patriarchs and prophets,—with the saints of the first ages, He appears to have held, in some angelic or human form, frequent converse;—there was every evidence given that they who were constituted the instructors of mankind were, in truth, divinely inspired. But, we go forward to the Jewish nation and records, to the era of miracle, when God reigned visibly—i. e. by visible emblems, among a whole people.—was their Sovereign—Judge—Protector—and Instructor. Let us take our station in the wilderness, among the tents of Israel; let us raise our eyes to Sinai enveloped in flames; let us hear the voice which made the assembled millions quake,—publishing the moral law,—and we, like them, shall fear and vow obedience. Going forward in Jewish history, let us listen to the predictions and heavenly teaching of inspired men;—we shall find them claiming to hold intercourse with Divinity, and their well-balanced minds prove that they could not be imposed upon; their piety, their lives, their deaths, demonstrate them too holy to deceive others,—their examples shew that they believed to the full, the celestial authority of the

precepts they taught. But advancing a little farther, we find prophecy verging into accomplishment,—a new scene and dispensation opening upon the world;—one born into it and attaining to years of maturity in humble circumstances, claiming to be the Son of God,—equal with the Father,—the promised seed,—the incarnate Saviour, come to crush the serpent who had poisoned the nature and the happiness of man. And He makes good his claims,—creation obeys His word,—the elements, nature, the powers of darkness, own His sway: death is vanquished on his own territories, and the conqueror ascends, in token of triumph, to the heaven where was His throne. Let us look to His precepts; infidelity dare not call them less than divine:—His life;—it is just such a one as a Divine Being, situated as was the Saviour, would lead on earth: the establishment of His religion; it challenged the might of the sovereigns of the world, it entered the lists with paganism, and the shrines of the gods were deserted and their temples mouldered away; men embraced it in the face of persecution, disgrace and death, thus furnishing the best of proofs that they were satisfied of its divinity.

Thus, “calling to remembrance the former days, keeping our eyes upon the facts, that it was impossible from the circumstances of

knowledge and refinement, in which Christianity appeared in the world, arising, as it did, in no age of barbarism and ignorance, that if an imposture, it should not be exposed and exploded: that its prophecies have been, and are fulfilling,---we must surely find our faith increased: there is ground given to believe that those who have doubts on the subject of religion, entertain them on account of their neglect of examining the history of Christianity,---a neglect which is most disgraceful to them as men and professing Christians.

But we come to a somewhat more practical remembrance of "former days," -a remembrance, which, if duly followed up, must have the best and most important effects on our conduct. We shall confine ourselves to the early history of the Christian Church, and just compare the Christians of this age, with the Christians of those primitive times; -the lesson we must learn will be one of shame; God grant it may be one of amendment! Remember it is with human examples which we have to do---men like ourselves,---and we shall find that in zeal, in faith, in every Christian virtue, in every article of Christian practice, there have been a sad defalcation and decline, keeping pace with the lapse of time. Let us turn over the records of martyrdom, and how splendid are the illustrations we there

see of devotedness, of sincerity, of unshaken faith, and of glowing zeal for the cause and the name with which the persecuted followers of the Saviour had connected themselves ! The honour of their Redeemer and their religion was to them a matter of the first importance,—they would not permit infidelity to reflect discredit on the one, while they remained silent, and never would suffer their practice by its inconsistency to bring disgrace upon the other : their object and aim were to maintain these principles at the hazard of life, and promote the interests of mankind, by promoting the spread and reception of Christianity. May it justly be asked, is such the zeal of the Christians of the present day ? - Again, do we look at their faith ? It was a principle of action, it was the ruling and supporting principle of their lives ; it was not shaken by the sneers of idolatry, it was not scared by the threats of magistrates and princes, the madness of the people, all the implements and horrors of torture and death, were in vain set in array against them : they had founded their belief and their hopes on a rock which nothing could shake, against which earth or hell could never prevail ; and they took care to examine their grounds of confidence before they took the venture and incurred the risk of a profession of Christianity ; they found them divine,

and as such, they rested on them, immovable and undaunted.--Admire their devotedness! rank, wealth, friends, life, were nothing if put into competition with their allegiance to heaven, with their religious duties; they "loved not the world nor the things of the world," because their faith pointed out to them a better inheritance; they were ready to sacrifice, and they did, in numberless instances, sacrifice all that the world, all that the heart hold dear, for God and for conscience. To trials so fiery we are not called;—but to self-denial, to steadfastness in the faith, to a renunciation of much that is around us in the way of pleasure and of gain,—we are enjoined; and what is our fulfilment of these duties?—O, does not a little worldly ridicule almost make us ashamed of our religion?—Are we not afraid to state the scruples which our duty and conscience suggest? Do not the oft-reflected follies of infidelity endanger our faith, fill us with wavering and doubt?—How little disposed are we, even in small matters, to deny ourselves,—how apt to snatch at some temporal gain and advantage at the expence of some duty, of some virtue!—How small a portion of the world, how little of ourselves do we renounce!—Our favourite inclinations and passions, how little disposed are we to sacrifice at the foot of the cross!

But to proceed ; - call to remembrance the sincerity of the early Christians, - there were not, in the first and purest ages, nominal professors. Disgrace and death marched in the train of a profession of Christianity, and the hypocrite had no end to answer ; God was then honoured with the heart, as well as with the lips - it was not then fashionable, elegant, decent, profitable to wear the Christian name, and the consequence was, they who bore deserved and did credit to it.

How pure the robe of Christian righteousness, when that robe was worn by the immediate followers of Him who " was despised and rejected of men ! " It was the innocent and holy deportment of the first disciples of the cross that marked them out for the vengeance of persecution ; this was the crime which rendered them odious in the sight of a corrupt generation ; - their abstinence from the debaucheries and dissipations that formed part of the religion of heathenism, was the mark by which they were singled out, and the true cause of the hatred and oppression which they every where encountered. O that such were now the marks and characteristics of those who profess to follow the spotless Lamb of God !

Then let us bear in mind how they valued the ordinances of religion ; - how much of a

privilege and honour, they thought prayer,—how much delight they took in praise! Like David, they loved the Scriptures and the sanctuary, —made the former their study, the latter their most delightful place of resort, and is prayer *our* privilege of highest estimation, —does the Sabbath bell sound sweetly in *our* ears, —are the Scriptures our text-book, our storehouse, our directory, —do *we* find the sanctuary, “the house of God and the gate of heaven.” does the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper return to us as a festival and a blessing. as a confirmation of faith, a purification from sin, an occasion in which we can testify our love and renew our pledge of obedience, —are we anxious to avail ourselves of every opportunity of participating in this holy rite, and ever solicitous to keep ourselves in that state of mind and that line of conduct which will render us not unworthy to be partakers of the body and blood of our Lord?

Let us “call to remembrance” also, the repentance, the discipline, the strictness of the early ages of the church. Notorious departures from virtue, inconsistencies of conduct, (for such, on account of the depravity of our nature and the peculiar circumstances in which the first Christians were placed, did occur,) were visited with public and marked reprobation, there was an exclusion from the privi

leges and communion of the church, and happy did the offender feel, if, after humiliation to the dust, after the censures of his brethren, the public avowal of his guilt,—that guilt was remitted, and he was restored to the society and benefits he had forfeited. Our religion requires from us, as Christians, self-denial, which is akin to penitence; but it shews us, also, we are sinners, and it demands repentance as a condition of salvation,—yet how rarely do we feel that sense of, and sorrow for sin which subsisted among the first believers! And yet their manners were more scrupulously correct than ours, they had fewer faults, and yet their repentance was more deep and lowly,—they did not avail themselves of the excuse which might have been made for them, emerging as they were from the impurities and licentiousness of heathenism, if they had occasionally fallen into some of their wonted irregularities,—but they embraced all the self-denial, and put on all the strict sanctity of the Christian faith, and any deviation from it was visited with the deepest self-humiliation and sorrow; while we, brought up from earliest infancy in the discipline of our holy faith, devoted to Christ by the sacrament of baptism, taught by our holy religion to abhor all impurity and irregularity, our eyes directed to the most perfect and holy of ex

amples,—when we fall, how soon are we reconciled to ourselves, how easy our penitence, how light our self-inflictions! I am speaking now of gross violations of Christian duty and decorum;—but real Christian penitence does not confine itself to this,—it sees, by the light of rigorous self-examination, many failures of obedience, much want of love to God, of conformity to His image, of compliance with the precepts of His religion, in the characters and deportment of those in whom the world sees nought but matter for admiration,—let us learn this lesson from the records of former days.

The Church, it is true, exacts no longer the tedious trials by which she formerly put to the test the sincerity of repentance,—she does not recognize those gradations of penitence by which, in successive order, those who had fallen were restored to communion and privilege. Discipline has necessarily changed with time and circumstances. I know not that the fasts which the primitive Church demanded are so necessary and so binding in our days, in the extent to which they were once carried; but the thing signified by them is demanded now as much as ever. The policy, not the spirit of the Church, has undergone a change. The flesh must still be mortified,—sin must still be followed by sorrow,—the sullied garment of innocence must be cleansed in the

tears of repentance, in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, or the gate of heaven will be shut to us. The nature and law of God are the same as ever, 'till they change, the sinner must be, in truth, the sincere penitent.

Thus, we must take shame to ourselves, when we look back to the first ages of the Church. If even we look back to our more immediate predecessors in Christianity, and find that many a wholesome observance has gone into disuse among us which was sacred with them, we shall have occasion to call back with a sigh, the remembrance of former days.

In conclusion; let us call to mind the deliverances which God has effected for His people in past times,—the consolations and helps He has given them,—for our comfort and support “in all time of our tribulation.” The persecuted followers of Jesus have ever rested on the promises of God, which they knew had been fulfilled in former periods and saw accomplished in their own days; and did we bear this in mind, sorrow and suffering would come to us despoiled of half their sting. Privations, disappointments, sickness, death, have little in them to distress him who remembers that in such cases God has delivered and will deliver: if we desire to disarm all our foes, let us go to the field of trial accoutred in

the armour of Divine consolations. Connected with these, are the mercies of Heaven shewn, in former days, to ourselves. The remembrance of them will excite in us gratitude, and nourish hope for the future.

Let us call to memory our sins,—it is on this head our memories chiefly fail us: let us remember they are recorded, though we forget them; and bear them in mind in the records of our repentance, that the Judge may not in those of condemnation. It will be advantageous therefore to call to mind the past judgments of God on sin. He “will not be mocked:”—the deluged world,—the ruined cities of Sodom and Gomorrah,—Nineveh,—Babylon,—Jerusalem, should tell to the now existing nations of the world a tale of horror which should teach amendment, lest they also be destroyed. And let the histories of Balaam and of Saul, of Judas and of Ananias, admonish every individual among us,—“Except we “repent,” we “shall all, likewise, perish.” Let us be careful that the sins of former days be not repeated, let us learn caution and wisdom from the past.

If thus we remember former days, ours shall not only be the name, but the reality of spiritual life,—ours, not the judgments, but the rewards of religion; we shall not incur the guilt of apostacy, nor fall under the wrath of an aveng-

ing God,—ours shall be the honour of adhering to a noble cause,—the happiness of serving a kind Master,—the approving testimony of conscience, and final admission to glory and felicity.

SERMON XI.

THE SAVIOUR'S LEGACY TO HIS DISCIPLES

JOHN xiv. 27.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

THE whole farewell discourse of our Lord to His disciples, of which these words form a part, presents us with one of the most deeply interesting and instructive portions of Holy Writ. The character of our Saviour, in whatever aspect His history places Him, offers so much that is kind and amiable,—the object He had in view, while sojourning in our world, and in our form, was so unspeakably merciful, and testified so much compassion and love for the unworthy and wretched, that we are at a loss to select any particular portion of His life, as displaying more of what is lovely and kind and affectionate than another. But perhaps, the full account which St. John has given us,

of His parting consolatory language, to the mourning disheartened disciples, will yield to no portion of the Gospel history, in the delightful illustrations which it affords, of heavenly kindness, condescension, and love.

When we call to mind, the blessedness which the disciples must have enjoyed in the society of their friend and Lord, and their imperfect views of His real character and the object of His advent, we shall not wonder, that, in the prospect of being deprived of Him, their hearts should be troubled, and their minds sustain a severe shock. -- Of this, Jesus was well aware. -- and we have only to look at His parting address to them, to see, at once, how admirably adapted it was to administer to them that consolation of which they stood so much in need. He begins by promising them mansions in the heavens, which He, in His approaching exaltation, was to prepare for their reception. He promises them also, a most efficient Comforter, whose arrival was amply to make up to them the loss they were about to sustain, -- and closes by a prayer for them to His Father, for those blessings, which would place their interests and their happiness, far out of the possibility of being injured by the world's hostility, or of being impaired by time or accident. But we limit ourselves to the words that have been read, -- "Peace I

leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Like a parting friend, or a dying parent, He leaves a blessing and a legacy to His sorrowing disciples: 'He leaves them peace, - a gift most especially suited to their destined office, as preachers of unpopular doctrines to a frowning world,- the unfriended promoters of measures, by which the malignity of principalities, and powers, earthly and infernal, would be most formidably excited. And what could arrive more opportunely, to hearts, troubled and afraid, than peace—what could be a more welcome visitant to souls filled with grief at the prospect of losing their best, their only friend, than peace?—What, to those, whose minds were disturbed with anxious forebodings for their safety, when deprived of their protector, could be more acceptable than that internal peace, which should still every fear, and remove every apprehension?

"My peace I give unto you." There is something peculiarly forcible and beautiful, in the mode which our Lord adopts of shewing the value of the gift He leaves with His sorrowing followers. It is, as if He had said I, who have given you so many proofs that my power is divine,—that all things are given to me, in heaven and in earth,—I, whose com-

mand, you have so often seen enforce instant obedience,—whose voice has calmed the sea, —expelled devils, and re-animated the dead ; —I give you *My* peace,—and can you doubt the sufficiency of the gift,—can you doubt, from your past experience, either my goodwill towards you, or my ability to carry it into effect?—I, who have said to the troubled ocean, “peace, be still,” can surely say, with the same efficacy, to your troubled bosoms, “My peace I give unto you.”

“Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” This is a continuation of the same idea. *My* peace, *My* benediction, are not the mere common-place well-wishing of the world, which is often without meaning,—or if it be sincere, is frequently ineffectual. I do not, like the world, wish you, what I cannot give, nor in its way of conferring benefits, do I impart to you such as are little worth, or bestow them on you, only for a short time. My gift of peace has meaning—has reality in it—it is what the world cannot give nor take away.

The circumstances in which the words under consideration were pronounced, and the sentiments they contain, could not fail to be interesting; even to indifferent, unconcerned persons ;—but how infinitely so ought they to be to us, who are as deeply concerned in them, as were the first disciples ! That peace

which our Lord left, as His parting blessing to them, *we* have as much need of as they had ;—and to us too, it is as kindly offered—the same compassionate Saviour is as ready to bestow it upon us. We are all surely aware of the importance of peace of mind. This world is, at best, to all of us, a scene of trouble and anxiety, and is to be succeeded by a state of existence, a contemplation of the destinies awaiting us in which, must furnish to every considerate mind reflexions the most solemn and mysterious. Now, to be furnished with hopes, principles, and a ground of confidence, which supply consolation, even in the most distressing worldly circumstances, and above all, to obtain clear views of the reality of a life beyond the grave,—to arrive at a certainty of endless happiness, to be possessed by us, when our days of trial here are past,—to be enabled to look upon death as a welcome visitor, and the grave as a bed of rest, must communicate a calmness and peace to the mind, which God and religion can alone impart. All this is offered to us ;—from heaven, is the Saviour ready to shower down upon us all these blessings. And who is there among us that will not embrace with eagerness the proffered mercies ?

Let us look at them a little more closely, and contemplate some particulars which go to

the production of that peace, which is the best earthly consolation and inheritance of man.

One of its essential ingredients is reconciliation with God by the pardon of sin. There needs no evidence to prove that God and sinful man are at variance. Once admit the fact that we have departed from original righteousness,—violated the Divine law, failed in obedience,—been guilty of rebellion, and who is there can plead innocent to these charges? Admit this, and the fact is established that there is war between the Creator and the creature. The state of the world tells it; disease, suffering and death proclaim it; our own hearts tremble, while reason and revelation combine in resistless testimony to the awful truth. And can there be peace of mind and of conscience in such circumstances? While the brow of Omnipotence is clouded with frowns, and the avenging sword is suspended but by a slender thread of life over our heads,—can we, if our eyes are open to the dread array of ruin that is mustered against us, enjoy peace and rest? As well may he, who finds himself at once on the brink of a precipice, look downward with unshaken nerve, on the gulph that yawns beneath him. “There is no peace”—saith God, “for the wicked,”—and our inmost souls confirm and

respond to the saying. So long as we are conscious of unrepented, and consequently unforgiven transgression, it must be thus.-- The mentally blind and hardened, who see not their danger, may, in general circumstances, be little conscious of fear;--but still, they can possess no positive peace--still, they stand on the very edge of perdition,—the more liable, the more ignorant of their danger,—and still they are ever liable to be aroused to a sense of their peril, by the warnings of the day, and the intimations of death. There can be no real peace without a sense of safety, without a persuasion of the good-will of heaven—insensibility is not peace,—and an awakening, especially when life is fast ebbing, to the awful conviction that God is "his foe, must summon around the sinner, all the gloom and the agony of fear, if not the utter darkness and horrors of despair.

But the Saviour speaks of peace—He came on an errand of peace. He fought—He died

He conquered to win peace for man. He pointed out the path of penitence, and shewed pardon and peace at the end of it. He offered the grace, of which the fruit is amendment, and the strength which yields obedience. He wept, that God might be won to smile on man. He was sorrowful, "even unto death," that man might rejoice.--He submitted to the last

enemy, that He might wash out sin in His blood,—that He might seal a covenant of peace by the sacrifice of Himself.—And, henceforth, it is not our misfortune, but our fault, if we are at war with the Eternal:—pardon is offered,—peace is promised, and if we will not repent, if we will not believe in the Saviour, and strive to bring forth the fruits of obedience,—if we will not take our loving Father in the heavens to our hearts, and admit the peace that passeth all understanding into our souls, our blood must be on our own heads,—we choose war with Him, who, to the despisers of His mercy, is “a consuming fire,” and irretrievable defeat, and endless death, must be the result of our choice.

This, then, is one source of peace,—reconciliation with God.—Close upon this, follows His favour and good offices.

When He pardons, He not only ceases from war, and purposes of vengeance, but opens the storehouse of all His Blessings to the prayers and the wants of His people. The absence of the Divine favour is enough to blight the fairest promises of earthly happiness,—it takes from them their charm and power of yielding felicity, and denies the prospect of any resource when they are gone: consequently, peace and happiness cannot result from their possession. We may possess

the goods of life, and God's favour makes us rich—preserves from their abuse,—and procures a better and more abiding portion, when they are withdrawn,—but it needs not that God should thunder,—should come forth from His place in wrath: let Him but withhold His favour and blessing, and prosperity is a curse, pleasures are tasteless,—in laughter even the *heart* is sad.

But let God look kindly down on man, and heaven commences on earth. There needs not splendour of rank, or boundless possessions, or a range of all the pleasures that men can enjoy;—it has been a thousand times seen that the portionless, the persecuted, the suffering, and dying, with no heritago but God's blessing, with no beam of light shining on their path, but the unseen light of Heaven's love,—have gloried in tribulation,—have spurned at earth's offerings,—pitied fortune's favourites, and sung the song of triumph amid the pangs of dissolution, and heard the whisperings of ineffable peace, amid the raging tumult of a thousand foes.

The presence of Christ, by His Spirit, with His people, is another source of that peace, which Christians enjoy.

It was the prospect of the Saviour's removal from them that cast a gloom over the first disciples;—and, to comfort them, He promised to

be with them always in spirit, though not in a visible form.—“ I will not leave you comfortless,— I will come again to you, and be with you always, even unto the end of the world.” And the comfort imparted by these assurances is the experienced blessing of Christians in all ages. The higher attainment they make in a religious life, the more richly shall they partake of this exalted privilege. They enjoy not, it is true, the gifts of miracle, and of knowledge, by which the Spirit of God manifested His dwelling with the saints of primitive times, but they possess an assurance of His presence, in communion with the Saviour, in the sacred seasons of devotion, — in the retirement of prayer, and the services of the sanctuary,—in the habitual frame and feeling of their minds ; it beams forth on them, from the sacred page, in the secrecy of meditation,—it is with them when they lie down, and when they rise up,—in its consciousness they go to sleep in peace, in its blessedness they awake to new pleasures, —and they feel not the withdrawment of gifts that were only meant to be temporary ; it would not add to their safety and felicity to be able to speak in all the languages that record Babel’s folly and impiety,—to bid the lame arise and walk,—and with a voice, reaching even to the tomb, to bid the dead live. The Spirit of God, dwelling in the human soul, is a

most satisfying sign of pardon and favour,—is the earnest of safety,—is the effective agent in encouraging every disposition friendly to peace with God, with ourselves, and with each other.

The assurance of eternal blessedness in a future world, is the only other ground I shall advert to, of Christian peace.

To this centre, and to establish this, evidently tend all that have been mentioned;—this is the grand principle on which the minds of the faithful find repose,—this is the cheering ray that illumines the darkest paths of their pilgrimage,—this is what enables them “to count not even their lives dear” so that they may well sustain the character, and perform the work allotted to them.

Just mark the difference between the gift of Christ, and the gifts of the world. And we shall confine our notice to the single one of peace.

The world's peace begins in ignorance,—consists with sin, and ends in ceaseless trouble. Christ's begins with grace,—dwells only with holiness,—ends in everlasting joy. As is the difference between a mortal lethargy, and a refreshing sleep, such is the difference between the peace of the Saviour, and that of the world;—it is such as He himself enjoys, that He communicates to His church and people.

How solid are the grounds of Christian

peace ! Those of us, with whom religion is something more than a name, can bear abundant testimony to this. If we have any rational and scriptural evidence for thinking that we possess God's favour, and can cherish a good hope, through grace, of eternal life, our peace is placed beyond the reach of disturbance,—our hearts will never have cause to be troubled or afraid. How independent does the peace of Christianity, which includes, in fact, every kind, and the best of happiness, how independent does it make the believer, of all beneath the sun ! Is poverty his portion ?—his is the rich heritage of God's favour and promises, and there is a kingdom awaiting him. Does he pine in disease and languishing ?—the health and safety of his immortal soul are secure. Are friends removed from his side by desertion and death ?—there is a friend beyond the possibility of change and the stroke of mortality,—and that Friend is his. The hour of nature's dissolution may be approaching, and the grave opening to his view,—there is One who will accompany him through the dark valley, and raise him immortal from the tomb. And when creation's funeral knell is ringing,—when the mountains are departing and the hills removing, *his* will be the persuasion, and the joyful thought, that there is a throne which no commotion can

shake, there are mansions which no destruction can reach,—promises respecting him which can never fail,—a home and a refuge prepared for him “eternal in the heavens.” Where, then, is room for apprehension?—It is excluded. How is it possible that a wave of trouble should ever flow over the peace of him to whom the Saviour’s legacy has descended?

Do *we*, my brethren, possess this peace?—Miserable indeed are they who have it not. They may be distinguished by the gifts of nature and of fortune,—the interested may flatter and the foolish may envy them,—but they have no security for the continuance of their earthly advantages, and when these fail, they have nothing at which to grasp;—they can calculate on no security of inheritance and happiness, and therefore can have no peace. The records of the world’s splendid misery are full of the worthlessness of all, save peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us beware of the kind of peace which insensibility or an unusually comfortable earthly lot, or a “form of godliness,” may seem to afford. It is false—it is ruinous:—its ravages, its fatality, are, and will be apparent in many a blighted hope,—engraven on many a broken heart. To how many death-beds has it given all the horrors of despair!—

how much of endless unavailing regret has it furnished, in the regions of the condemned!

O then for light, when all otherwise would be darkness around, to shine in the gloom of adverse circumstances,—in the shades of death!—O for an anchor of the soul,—a spot on which to plant the feet, when all things shall shrink and shrivel into nothing! O for hope, in the midst of despair,—for assurance in the hour of trembling,—for a home, when the world is burning! Let these have the aspirations of our souls,—the fervency of our prayers, and the energy of our endeavours, *now* when we may secure them. And forget not, that the only light which can arise in our darkness, is that which proceeds from the Star of Bethlehem—the only spot on which we shall be able safely to rest, is “the Rock of Ages,”—the only hope, is the hope of immortality,—the only assurance, the all-sufficient merits of the Saviour, and the promises of God,—the only home of our souls is “the city which hath foundations.”

Let us attend then, most anxiously, to the concerns of eternity, that ours may be this peace. Let us implore of the Son of God, to bestow on us this His peculiar blessing. May we be more and more urgent in seeking His grace, and the aids of His Spirit, to lead us

into "the ways" which "are pleasantness," and the "paths" which "are peace." Thus our trials and afflictions, which we must expect here, will press upon us lightly,—will, in truth, appear to us but of momentary duration,—and, at length, having finished our course, and kept the faith, we shall attain the abodes of perfect peace, and dwell for ever with Him who bequeathed it to His people when He left the world.

SERMON XII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ESTIMATE OF LIFE AND DEATH.

PHILIPPIANS i. 21.

To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

SUCH were the sentiments of St. Paul in the midst of persecution which seemed not unlikely to terminate in his death. Who is there that does not anxiously desire such to be his views, his state of feeling, as to life and death? Is it not a grand and triumphant sentiment which the words of our text present to us a noble and blessed alternative which they describe? They contain the great art of living and dying well, an art which man had better learn than any of those which may add to his wealth or build up his reputation.

Let us not contemplate these words, merely as matter of record,—it will not be enough to content ourselves with admiring the magna-

the name, contributed signation, the heavenly Redeemer. They indicate; we are summoned. There the voice of duty and of interest, to think, to feel and act, as did the Apostle. By us is attainable an equally happy state of mind; to the weakest and meanest may belong the high honour of living "to Christ," the matchless felicity of seeing in death nothing but "gain."

1. But let us examine the text, and inquire WHAT LINE OF CONDUCT WILL ENABLE EACH OF US TO SAY,—“to me to live is Christ?” In order to this, *the glory of Christ must be the object of our lives*: this was the grand end ever kept in view by St. Paul; this it was that made burn so brightly the flame of his zeal, that made him unwearied in labour, dauntless amidst peril, careless of advantage, of honour, of life, so that he could promote the cause and do the will of Him who had shewed to him such signal mercy. True,—his work is not assigned to the generality of Christians, their sphere of action is not, like his—the world;—theirs cannot be his mighty projects; but in promoting the honour of their Saviour, can they imitate him in nothing? It pleases Him whom we serve, to accept from us all, as marks of honour to Himself, our exclusive dependance on, and faith in Him. When we

resist the alligments of
 we make the sacrifice of
 we give to Him our hearts and
 He graciously pleases to accept such
 as so many rays added to the brightness of
 His glory. That the Christian should fight
 manfully "the good fight of faith," should
 adhere to the truth amidst every temptation to
 error,—that he should be ready to give up all
 for his Saviour, his actions, and frames of
 mind by which Christ is glorified. Let it be
 our object to recommend by our lives the
 Gospel to those around us;—thus shall we
 glorify "our Father who is in heaven," thus
 shall we do our best to walk in the steps of
 those by whom many were converted to the
 faith. Let us, in fine,—as Christ, while on
 earth, was actuated by the perpetual desire of
 honouring Him who sent Him, and of finishing
 His work, look beyond human examples to
 this most perfect of patterns, and in this,
 strive and pray to be like Him: let the men of
 substance, in addition to themselves, give of
 their wealth to every purpose of charity, to
 the promotion of Christianity in our own and
 other lands;—let the poor give their hearts,
 and if they have nought else to give, they have
 offered their all, and nothing more is required.
 Thus, and in various other ways that might be
 mentioned, can they who call themselves by

the name, contribute to the honour of their Redeemer.

There is another feature in the conduct which is indicated by making Christ the object of living,—it is, *having His grave for the principle of life*. This requires not illustration,—without the aids of His grace, we can never belong to the Saviour, can never live to His honour, nor our own advantage: it is hypocrisy to attach ourselves, in any way, to Him, unless “His grace be sufficient for us;” without Him we can do nothing, He must be within us, the principle of spiritual life.

His word also, must be the rule of our conduct,—thus also “to us to live is Christ,”—when we decide all our difficulties and regulate our whole deportment by His recorded example and precepts. Thus must the Saviour be the principle, rule, and end of our living: and *ought* not He to be so, who lived and died for us?

II. We come now to the second part of our subject,—**TO ME TO DIE IS GAIN**. Natural and happy consequence of the former part of the Apostle’s experience,—“to me to live is Christ!” There is an inseparable connexion between the two parts of the declaration. He who lives to the honour of Christ, and He alone, die when and how he may, must be a

gainer. Here is the grand excellence of our holy religion, here is that which man had long been in quest of, which nature or philosophy could never attain. It would have been well that death had been divested of his terrors,—that some discovery had been made to us which could disarm the last enemy of somewhat of the bitterness of his sting,—if it had been made a matter of quiet resignation, which involved no loss; but that, instead of these, it should be the messenger of peace, the forerunner of unspeakable happiness, productive of eternal and infinite gain,—that it should be made an object of desire, instead of dread,—this, indeed, should kindle in us a flame of holy love and of ardent gratitude, should animate to a most willing obedience. Death, then, is to the Christian, no longer, a melancholy termination of his earthly course, a mournful debt of nature which must be paid;—no longer the destroyer of hope and happiness,—a tyrant, the mention of whose name robs every face of its smile and every heart of its gaiety;—he assumes the character of a deliverer and a friend,—he is the bearer of reward and blessing to him who lives to Christ;—he introduces him to the most glorious and blessed society, even the society of heaven, for which it is the Christian's ardent, unceasing study to fit himself, and whose chief

hope and comfort is, that where his glorified Redeemer now is, there he himself will in due time be also. Communion with his Lord and Master here, is the object of his highest attainment; but imperfectly and at a distance,—“darkly,” as “through a glass;”—at intervals, only, through the prevalence of corruption and the cares of other things, is he enabled, while here, to behold Him whom his soul loveth. The time, however, of probation and imperfection rapidly wears away,—the clouds that intervene are to be dispersed,—the load of mortality is to be thrown off, the spirit is to ascend to the regions of immortality, there to dwell for ever in the blessed light of that countenance which gives to heaven its glory and to its inhabitants their bliss. There, the Deity, arrayed in human form, exhibits that diminished display of divine perfection on which man can look and not die. In the Saviour’s character and likeness, the majesty of the Godhead is softened down into that aspect of love and friendliness with which the Christian can hold an intercourse, as much surpassing in sweetness and delight that which the purest and closest of earthly friendships yield, as Heaven surpasses the abodes of mortality.

- The happiness of children with a most kind parent—the delight of the disciple in society with a most revered instructor—the mutual

joys of friendship, when heart meets heart, and soul is united to soul in most harmonious accord—~~are~~ but faint emblems of the blessedness of an abode with the Divine teacher, the most kind Saviour, the loving “Father in heaven.” We descend from such heights of glory and felicity as are faintly shadowed forth in anticipations like these, though still we soar far above all earthly sources of happiness, when we look forward to association with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect;—with those unfallen beings who have ever felt a deep interest in our race, and will delight in joining in our adoration of “Him that sitteth on the throne;” and who can sufficiently appreciate the happiness of renewing our union with the best and the most loved of our friends of earth,—of again meeting those with whom we have held sweet converse, of finding around us the holiest and the most renowned of former ages, the men who have truly deserved the applauses of the world, whose deeds of high and noble daring in their Master’s cause, have come down recorded as our examples, in doing and in suffering, in life and in death?

But further:—“to die is gain” to the believer in Jesus, because, in that state which succeeds death, he will be no more liable to sin. “The law in his members warring

against the law of his mind,"—the continual opposition between duty and inclination—the mixture of all his motives—the imperfection of all his services,—these are the great sources of his grief in the present state of existence,—these mar even the foretastes of heaven which his Father's goodness vouchsafes him. It is only the Christian who has a proper perception of the evils and bitterness of sin;—he sees in it the source of all the sorrows and pains to which man is heir, as that which defaced the new creation, and closed the gates of Paradise; he contemplates it in its real and essential deformity, as containing a violation of the order and beauty of the Creator's works, involving the principles of rebellion and the foulest ingratitude;—he beholds it as giving the sting to temporal, and despair to eternal death,—and to be delivered from it in all its shapes and degrees, must be full of delightful anticipation to his renewed nature. Death realizes this anticipation;—the believer is preparing for the world into which "nothing that defileth can enter,"—where sin shall no more have dominion over him,—where weakness shall no more oppress, opposite principles shall no more disquiet him,—where his whole heart and soul shall be inscribed with the dedication, "Holiness unto the Lord."

The lover of sin can have no idea of a state of

future blessedness, the heaven of the Christian can have no charms for him,—it is some paradise of the senses to which he looks forward, if he has any idea of happiness beyond the grave. The wages of sin is the death that involves endless loss and ruin. If we have any love for ourselves, any sense of interest, any wisdom, any wish for felicity,—we must wage perpetual war with sin, a war that admits of no truce, of no parley, which must end in its complete subjection in the soul, which can only cease, when, on the bed of death, (to the Christian a field of victory,) he can say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course,”—“the sting of death was sin,” “thanks be unto God, who hath given me the victory,” who hath promised that heaven into which sin can never enter.

Finally. Dissolution is gain to the Christian, because it puts him in possession of the most supreme happiness. The man who takes the Bible for his standard, and the example of Jesus Christ for his model, whatever may be his situation as to riches, or indeed any other external circumstance, is the happiest being that the earth contains,—because his mind is at rest with regard to futurity; he has something of a definite nature to look forward to, when this scene shall have closed; he is, it is true, a stranger and a pilgrim here, but he has a home,

he has a certain inheritance awaiting his arrival at his journey's end. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," what God hath in store for His people,—but we may rest assured of *this*—it is the gift of Omnipotence—it is purchased by the Saviour's blood, and it must be such as will compensate the martyrs and confessors of old for their sufferings,—such as will make every sorrow, every suffering, every sacrifice seem as nothing; will cause every sigh and tear to pass away from the remembrance. Heaven is the land of rest to the weary and heavy laden,—that rest which can only be fully valued, after a long and toilsome probation,—the rest which no care shall ruffle, no fear shall invade. There shall no discords nor misunderstanding interrupt the harmony that reigns,—no clouds shall intervene between the blessed and the sun of their glory and joy; the fountain of bliss shall be always open; the desire for happiness never satiated and never disappointed. It is the land of knowledge, of the full developement of every faculty,—where attainments shall be ever making, where the mind shall not pursue science in vain, and error shall never lead it astray. Every joy shall be tasted in its fulness, without defect, without alloy. There are no dregs in the cup of heavenly pleasure,—there are no time and no limit. Once let us catch a glimpse, and enjoy

a foretaste of them, and the world, with all its boasted glory and happiness, will sink into insignificance: there will no beauty shine like the beauty of holiness, and the best and purest of our joys on earth, the sweetest of the flowers of Eden we still inherit, will only make us long for those of the paradise on high, over which the serpent has never trailed his poisonous folds, which have never been blighted by the breath of sin. Cheered by such hopes, there is no bed of death so deserted, so comfortless, so much the scene of agony, but will have shed around it the atmosphere of heaven, but shall exhibit a soul rejoicing, while nature sends forth the cry of suffering;—let disease and poverty do their worst,—let death be ever so lingering and terrible in his approach,—~~when~~ he comes, neither earth nor hell, “nor things present, nor things to come,” can rob the Christian of his parting shout of triumph, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” “To me, to live is Christ, to die is gain.” Wavering between two worlds, while hope knows not whether to whisper recovery to health, or the mortal sickness that leads to immortality,—while the man of sin in such circumstances has only *one* ardent wish, that he may return to the world he loves so well, and *one* aspect of despair towards the grave,—*he* can resign him-

self for death or life into the hands of his God. I have lived to Christ, I have lived on him;—if I die, it is in union and friendship with him;—if I live, he is my life, and to die is far better, for then is my union cemented with him by the hand of death, and sin shall never more threaten my happiness with a writing of divorcement.

To die, must be to us all either infinite loss or gain,—there is but one way in which to make death and glory and blessedness agree in one,—that way is Christ, is a life devoted to Him. Men have died without the Gospel and without its hopes; they have lived to themselves, their object has been to live the life of ostentation, and die the graceful death of the hero or the stoic. But the most renowned warrior who has yielded up his breath on some battle plain, where was achieved his country's liberty, whose fall was marked by victory's choicest laurels, whose fame is made the subject of many a song of triumph, whose statues rise in every place of concourse, and whose memory lies embalmed in the hearts of his countrymen,—is death his gain? while the only enemy he left unconquered was sin, while the only foe that hovered over his glorious bed of honour was the God of Heaven? He has won the fleeting breath of applause, monuments record, and history celebrates him,—he has inscribed his name on the memorials of ho-

nour, but he has not written it in the book of life, —he has snatched the laurel of victory from the hand of death, but he has not plucked a branch of the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations ;”— he has forgotten to aim at a heavenly crown,— and say, what will the breath of human praise, what will the memorials of human gratitude avail him in the day when he shall be driven from the judgment seat to disgrace and woe? Science, too, may weave her garlands for the man of philosophy and literary taste,—he may leave behind him, after a death that looks lovely and decorous and noble in the eyes of men, works that promise immortality ;—but he studied not himself, he learned no lessons of his unworthiness, he acquainted not himself with God, he lived with science and with art, with vanity and self-applause, he took not the Saviour for the source and the guide of life, he drank deep of the stream of knowledge, but he sought not of Him who had them to give, draughts of the “ living water ;”—his worldly wisdom will not avail him in the day when it shall be branded with the character of utter folly. But he who dies a conqueror over sin, with the knowledge of himself, his God, and Saviour, though his closing scene be the meanest hovel in which man ever dwelt, with no witness, no comforter, unknown, unpitied, unmourned,—his are a

glory and a happiness which the far-famed warrior and boasted sage shall never know.

My brethren, in health and prosperity, when all is well and cheerful around us, we may be independent, perhaps, of religion, may enjoy something that looks like happiness and peace. But let us think of death, once imagine ourselves stretched on the bed from which we shall never arise,—and then how barren of comfort, how fruitful in accusation and despair, will be the retrospect of a life without Christ! None but He, nothing but faith, a cordial and scriptural reception of him can then sustain the aching head, the trembling shattered frame, and support the sinking spirits. O let us love him, live to him, and he will then be our comforter; we *must* be happy: let the world fluctuate as it may, we shall sink into the grave with a song of triumph on our lips, and rise to taste how fully “death is gain!”

SERMON XIII.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE WISDOM WHICH IS
FROM ABOVE.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths
are peace.*

OF whom, or what does the wise man speak? What are "the pleasant ways," and "the peaceful paths," which he recommends to our notice? If we look to some parts of the history of the royal sage, we may almost conclude (and the conclusion would be satisfactory to not a few) that pleasure and sensuality and self-indulgence were, in the words before us, celebrated as connected with happiness and peace; and the young and the gay and the dissipated might rejoice in having scripture on their side in commendation of their favourite pursuit, would admit at once its authority, and bow in this case to its dictates, how little

soever they may be disposed to do so, when they take another side and recommend other courses.

But it need not be stated that it is not the enchantress, the syren goddess Pleasure, of whom Solomon discourses. He had tasted of *her cup*,—he had walked with her in the most flowery paths in which she could lead him,—but found there, neither pleasantness nor peace. Leaving her who had deceived him, he took up with another companion, he chose another guide,—the guide of his youth; and whereas, he bears testimony that, of the former, he reaped only disappointment and weariness and sin, he tells us that, of the latter, he found all the promises fully realized;—the felicity, the satisfaction, he had never derived from the cup of pleasure, nor found in its tempting bowers.—And *who* is the friend with whom at length he chose to walk,—with whom, in the remainder of his life, (or, the greater part of it) he held sweet communion, and to whom he trusted for comfort in sorrow, for mental health in sickness, for the support of his dying head, and the deposit of his immortal hopes, when he was about to descend from the throne to the sepulchre?—that friend was WISDOM; she who dwelt with Adam in Paradise, and gave its flavour to every fruit, and to every flower its tint:—whose smile gave to

Eden. its radiance, and her breath, to the atmosphere of the untainted world, its salubrity and its sweetness;—who frowned on sinning man, and Paradise was no more.—Again united to her, our first parents recovered half their forfeited happiness, and were enabled to look forward to its completion in that heaven, to which she undertook to lead them. With her, Enoch walked on earth, and and guided by her, found the way to heaven without tasting of death. With her for his counsellor, Melchisedek reigned in peace. The patriarchs walked uninjured and uncorrupted amid a world of idolatry and of foes. Israel flourished in Egypt, in spite of bondage and persecution,—spoiled their spoiler, —marched in safety through the waves and the wilderness,—overthrew the mighty nations, and entered upon the fertility and the wealth of Canaan. While she presided in the Prince and Priest, Israel was happy and invincible,—when she was discarded, the Assyrian triumphed. She spoke and wrought by the prophets: in alliance with her, they made monarchs tremble on their thrones, ruled the powers of nature, could find bread in famine, homes in deserts, happiness in prison and in death. She seated Elijah in that fiery car in which he soared above the grave to heaven. In many, —in almost all the other parts of the

earth she was a stranger, and misery and war and oppression and cruelty and vice reigned. Where she smiled ever so faintly, and shewed herself even for a moment, darkness and sorrow and sin fled before her. All that was great and good and happy in antiquity, flowed from her. Many an individual of the days of heathenism, it is hoped, found the way to virtue and to heaven, under her most obscure rays;—and whenever Philosophy almost succeeded in grasping her, men wondered at the favoured mortals as gods.

But still she was little known. She had, more or less, since the Fall, estranged herself from man and her most favoured friends; the comparatively happy and distinguished, caught but imperfect glances and interrupted smiles. They were taught to look forward to times, when she would return and dwell most intimately with those who wooed her friendship, and they sighed that to them was not vouchsafed her full manifestation. Prophets and kings would willingly have changed places with the least gifted and most lowly of those who were to live on earth, and be contemporary with wisdom. Meanwhile her footsteps became less frequent and less distinct,—she seemed to have forsaken those ungrateful beings, to whom she had lifted up her voice in vain;—she ceased to cry without, to urge her

entreaties in the gates, --and in her absence, nature languished, man degenerated, -- cities went to ruin, empires declined and fell, and where was pleasantness, and where was peace when wisdom had fled! -- They were not to be found in the shades of Academus, for there the sophist and the infidel had fixed their seats; -- they dwelt not in Jerusalem, nor its temple, for the Scribe and the Pharisee and the rod of foreign rule were there, -- they were not found near the palace, nor the throne, for there was tyranny, there was fear: -- the dagger and the poison had banished pleasantness from the rulers of the abandoned world. Neither were they found in the cottages of the poor, for wisdom and piety, the poor man's friends, were fled. -- "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift," -- for the return of incarnate wisdom to earth, in the person of the Son of God! -- We enter not into the wondrous, the inconceivable essence of this mysterious Being, -- we only state that in Him, dwelt that which prophets and patriarchs knew not, or knew but imperfectly, -- which was scarcely dreamed of in the schools of philosophy, -- the wisdom which could retrieve the ruined affairs of man, reform his nature, recudow him with his Creator's image, teach him to pass holily and happily through life, to smile at death, and welcome judgment. -- With

Him came atonement, justification, sanctification, complete redemption, - the full revelation of life and immortality, of God and man, with him descended pleasantness and peace to those who had long been strangers to either; and he himself furnished the most perfect demonstration of the truth of our text, "that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." - Were his the softnesses, the honours and the riches of life, - was his abode a palace, - did fortune, did earthly distinction, did the comforts of life fall to his share? - *His* visage was more mured than that of any man. - He had not where to lay his head, - contempt, persecution, poverty and death, were his portion: and yet was he supremely happy, - and yet many were the times that he rejoiced in spirit. Independent of all that was earthly and external, he could be calm and blessed, though all around conspired to distrust and to distress him. What was it that sustained him? - made him triumph - superior to suffering and to sorrow, - happy under misery, - God-like on the cross, immortal in the tomb? That wisdom, which in him dwelt in its fulness, - (I speak of him as man) - the consciousness of rectitude - the moral self-estimation that was his, - the assurance that what he did was wise and good and beneficent, - and disinterested, - that he

discharged every duty,--fulfilled his task,-- finished his work,-- did all things well,-- these made all his ways, sad and solitary and difficult as they were, "ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace."

And what were the circumstances and experience of those that followed him?--They too, were sufferers, were despised, were persecuted to the death. What toils like theirs, -- what journeyings, what perils, what opposition, what insults, what anxieties, like those with which their whole course was familiar? And yet, where the minion of fortune so happy as they?--where the bosom, pillowed on the affections, the luxuries and the joys of life, in which peace dwelt,--a peace like that which was the tenant of their souls?--And what path of life so smooth, so flowery, so fertile in resting-places,--in all that could delight the eye and please the taste, as the path of wisdom and of duty, and of usefulness to man's best interests, in which *they* walked, in which *they* perished?--Thus, in the most marked cases of human suffering, we make out the truth of the text. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."--Thus, surely, the case before us, is seen in a most triumphant light. A little further examination of the matter, only serves more fully to establish its truth. Who have

been the happy, the peaceful, and the admired,—the really great, in all ages of the world?—the characters to which men have had recourse in their time of need?—to whom they have given their confidence and their hearts? The wise, the virtuous, the pious—the Christian. By these alone, happiness has been grasped, pleasure enjoyed;—their fame is that alone which will not perish,—their laurels, those which will bloom through eternity. Who are they around us whose brows are most serene, whose tempers are most equal, who best endure affliction, who enjoy prosperity with moderation, who are prepared for every exigence?—The men who have listened to the admonitions, and are guided by the precepts of heavenly wisdom. Ask them and they will tell you, that godliness is profitable in all respects, — that it has the promise of, or gives the most perfect happiness, even in the life that now is—that it secures health of body and of mind,—that it promotes the good name and reputation of those who really possess it,—that it is the surest source of prosperity and influence,—that it destroys the bad and mischievous passions, and cherishes every holy and happy disposition,—that it gives the most glorious and cheering hopes of futurity;—they will tell you that virtue brings its own reward in the

self-approbation which it earns,—that duty is pleasure,—that the moral sense, the noblest faculty in man, is far more delighted by the consideration of what is wise and good, with conduct regulated by the dictates of wisdom, than the senses can be by all that the worldly and the luxurious call pleasure :—that they walk through life with their God,—and what road can be dreary, can be rough ?—that they commune with Him, and what other society could confer such honour and such felicity ?—that every supply and comfort, and support, —that all of earthly advantage, friends and endearments, which are for their good, are theirs in the way they go,—and that, at the end, is the “ city that hath foundations,” where God, where wisdom, where holiness and immortal happiness reside, in all their fulness of inconceivable blessings.

It has been supposed, and is still deemed, that in other than wisdom's paths is pleasantness ; but no one ever dared affirm, that in other paths is *peace*. No—peace with God and ourselves, can alone flow from true religion,—peace of conscience, the approval of our own heart and judgment. Is this enjoyed by the votaries of folly, of sin, of sensuality ? Can they look within,—can they bear to think ? Dare they listen to,—must they not stifle the remonstrances of the internal monitor, which

tells them that they are offending their God, degrading and ruining themselves? And wisdom is also the source of peace with others. Subduing the bad and stormy passions which disturb our own happiness and quiet, as much as they endanger and destroy our virtue, it teaches and inclines us to follow, as far as possible, peace with all men. It teaches us a moderate estimate of ourselves, of our own rights; --it leads to a due consideration of what others are entitled to; --it suppresses envy, animosity, strife; --it inspires charity and benevolence; --and it must, in the end, win the love, or at least, the respect, and probably the good offices of all around us. But what is this to peace with God, --the sense of pardon and reconciliation, --the feeling of having Him for a friend, and heaven for a home? This is indeed the "peace that passeth understanding, the peace which the world can neither give nor take away." Then, there is resulting from this fruitful source, the sense of being in the right path, which to the traveller, -- to the traveller to eternity, must communicate a delightful internal tranquillity; --there is the assurance that we are safe, since no one, since nothing can harm us "if we be followers of that which is good." And when sorrow comes, when adversity depresses, -- when the sky is heavy and threatening, --when we are weary and

heavy laden, and long to be at rest,—portionless, destitute, though we may be as to earthly goods, what can rob us of the best of all portions, the greatest of all goods, Peace? —the assurance that our happiness is not embarked on the ocean of life, but safe in the fair haven to which we are hastening,—that soon we shall be where “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are for ever at rest?” —“All her paths are peace”—there is no fluctuation, there is no vicissitude,—a storm at one season and then a calm. Setting out from one point, they lead directly to the home and the rest:—there can be no doubt of the way, —it is plain and straight, and the Friend, the Guide, and the Comforter are always near,—the prize is ever in view:—no wonder then, that “wisdom’s paths are peace.”

It is difficult to do justice to a subject like the present,—to give to religion and virtue their meed of beauty and excellence,—to paint them in their true colours; to shew how pleasure is, in every particular, attached to goodness,—how easy are the ways of truth,—how honourable, how dignified, in comparison with those of falsehood and vice,—how certain, how durable the delights of virtue,—and it is not in the power of language to describe the full rewards of wisdom. Let us take inspiration for our guide,—let us hear how the Spirit of

God describes the fair form and beauty and excellence of her we have endeavoured to exhibit to the view. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding! For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

After this, shall we be told of the pleasures of sin,—shall indulgence be claimed for a little folly? Shall it be deemed excusable that the young go a little out of the right way, to taste those joys which are said to be natural to their time of life? Shall apologies be made for occasional deviations from the paths of innocence and virtue, on the ground that it is pardonable in youth to love and pursue pleasure?—that wisdom is too grave and too solemn, and virtue too dull and monotonous for the hilarity, the warmth of heart, and the ardent imagination of the young? Shall it be said that time will cure

folly, that years will give wisdom,—that virtue will grow up in the heart, as it becomes cold, —in the mind, as it becomes weary of folly and trifling?—that pleasantness must be sought in much that wisdom will disapprove, but that peace will be looked for at last in the wisdom and the piety from which alone she can be found? Away with such matchless folly, such childish drivelling, the insipid, unmeaning, but most dangerous morality, (if it may be so called) of the novel and the theatre! There is nothing more contemptible in point of intellect, more glaringly untrue, more fatal, than these crafty accommodations of the half-rake, half-moralist, and most execrable school which foment passions already too strong, brings out to maturity, and awakes to life and strength, vices that might have been destroyed in the bud, or kept for ever dormant. Oh! infidelity has slain her thousands, —but the mischief, the poison, I refer to, has slain, is slaying, will slay her tens of thousands.

We grant that vice has her attractions to our fallen nature,—that these attractions are present, pressing and obtrusive,—decked out in every gaydy colour; that the serpent and the poison, at the bottom of her cup, may be awfully concealed, and nought but smiles and blandishments, and lawful, innocent, natural enjoyments seem to woo the inexperienced

short-sighted victim. And it is pity there should be aught that looks like beauty like loveliness, like elegance, allied with the foul monster sin!—and it is woe to man when the tempter assumes the form of an angel of light. We have conceded then, flowers and attractions, alas! too specious and alluring, to the paths of vice,—that she sometimes apes the graces, and promises the pleasures of virtue. But do we concede to the would-be-moralists of former or present times, that wisdom and virtue are morose and rigid,—that smiles wither and enjoyment dies, when a man enters the paths of duty to God, to his neighbours and to himself? It is a foul libel on the loveliest idea that ever shot across the soul of man,

on the very essence of beauty and joy, to hint at deformity and ruggedness and wrinkles in the features of piety;—true, she may make less shew than do vicious pleasures, but it is because she possesses the real merit and substance,—she despises the tinsel, because she possesses the gold. She is “the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;” and as well might a comparison be made, between the purest and loveliest of the daughters of virtue, and the foulest and most degraded victim of vice, as between her whom our text commends, and the deceiver who would tempt men from her paths;—she has no borrowed

and meretricious attractions, because it is as impossible to add to her real beauty, as to give a new and improving tint to the rainbow, or rival the splendour of the summer sun.

O then, who would not at once have recourse to wisdom, without undergoing the probation, the disappointment, the repentance of vice? Wisdom ought to be peculiarly attractive to the youthful,—she makes them her care,—she has wherewith to repay all the ardent affections which they have to give,—to satisfy all the longing desires after happiness which fill their breasts. She alone is able to guide them safely,—to reward their pursuit,

to shew them where pleasure dwells, - to lead them to peace,—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from iniquity is understanding.”—To fear Him is to avoid all other cause of fear, - to shun iniquity, is to avoid all that mars enjoyment that causes sorrow and suffering. “She loves them that love her, and they that seek her early shall find her.”—Be ours no other love, —no other object of seeking. —So shall ours be the fruit that is better than gold, and the revenue that is better than choice silver; so shall our “ways be pleasantness, and all our paths peace.”

SERMON XIV.

CHRIST, THE OFFERING FOR SIN

2 CORINTHIANS V. 21.*

*For we both made Him to be sin for us, who knew no
sin; that we might by His made the righteousness of God
in Him.*

THE verse immediately preceding our text contains a most affecting exhortation to men, to be reconciled to God, that, now before us is full of encouragement, and contains strong argument why we should hasten to be so. If we want a surance of the good-will of God to man, of His most disinterested desire that we should make our peace with him we have only to remember that he beseeches that he intreats us to return to his friendship, to contemplate the Son of God, made for us a sin offering, an offering that could not fail to appease and atone. If we want other argument than that of our own necessities and

misery, while alienated from heaven and its blessedness, let us think what has been done for our recovery and restoration, and if there be any gratitude, any feeling in our souls, if goodness can move, if love can affect us, we shall return to Him, from whom we have departed;—we shall seek to be cleansed in the blood that was shed, and clothed in the robe that was prepared for us, when we contemplate Him, “who was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” The text will lead us—

I. To take a view of the grand feature of the Gospel, THE CONSTITUTION OF CHRIST A SIN-OFFERING FOR US:

II. To remark HIS FITNESS,—HIS EXCLUSIVE FITNESS FOR THE CHARACTER HE THUS SUSTAINED, and—

III. To consider THE INFINITE ADVANTAGES ARISING TO BELIEVERS FROM THE DEATH OF THE SAVIOUR.

I. “He hath made Him to be sin for us.

God looked upon the earth which He had created, and he beheld it labouring under his curse,—its inhabitants defiled in sin,—their

rebellion and impurity calling on the justice of heaven to vindicate itself in their destruction. We know only of another class of beings in the universe, like man, outcasts from the favour of the Most High, "the angels that kept not their first estate." On them the Almighty poured the vengeance of His displeasure, and visited with the well-earned reward of their crime. Pity seems never to have been excited by *their* wretchedness, nor mercy to have pleaded in *their* behalf. We cannot tell if there were less atrocity in the sins of man, than in the rebellion of these fallen spirits,—whether the circumstance of our seduction by the great Tempter, who, by this foul act sealed his own fate,—whether this circumstance operated as an argument in our favour,—whether the Almighty was determined to defeat the malice of the arch-apostate, to promote His own glory, and add to the redeemed sinner a blessedness, which, had he never fallen, would not have been his.

or whether it was unmingled compassion for the erring and the wretched, that prompted our deliverance;—probably, it was all these combining in the Divine mind, that suggested the wondrous scheme, which was to effect our reconciliation to heaven, and our restoration to its felicity. It is enough, that mercy presided in the councils of Deity,—mercy, whose

powerful pleadings may be inferred from the vast results to which they gave rise; for, in considering this subject, we must never lose sight of the difficulties (if we may so term them) in which Omnipotence was placed, in regard to its dealings with men. We must ever hold in remembrance, the *harmony* of the divine attributes,—the claims of the divine perfections. How could the Deity retain His unyielding regard to justice, and yet become the justifier of the offender? His truth was pledged—his character was involved in a certain visitation upon the sinner, of the judgments he had denounced. Justice demanded her victim, and mercy must have been silent for ever, had not infinite wisdom devised the plan of substitution, and He who is mercy itself undertaken to fulfil the necessary conditions. It was not sufficient that the expedient should have been devised,—that the Divine justice should have admitted it as satisfactory. How was it to be carried into effect? Who was to become responsible for the operative part of the scheme? Who was to be the propitiatory victim for man? Who could bear his guilt and carry his sorrows? Willingness was not all that was requisite,—competency was required also. It might have been revealed to our race that God would accept of a substitute, if such could be found to bear our

guilt and its punishment; but where in the universe could the eye of the sinner turn, and fix upon one capable of enduring the penalty, —who could, unannihilated, have stood the mark for heaven's vengeance? Where was he who could obey, in such perfection, as to make his obedience available to millions, —or so suffer as to exhaust the vials of Divine wrath? — The purest of the spirits "that excel in strength," would have pleaded his inability to fulfil more than his own allotment of duty, — his utter incapacity to take upon him a burden too heavy for created might. — The plan for man's recovery, however, had been arranged in the Divine councils. When all heaven was waiting in anxious expectation, as to the means by which mercy was to take effect, the Son of God presented Himself as the victim who was to satisfy the justice, and vindicate by his own sufferings, the majesty of the Godhead. He gave himself — (for we must use the language of men :) He gave himself into the hands of his Father, — was accepted, and thenceforward stood, by Divine appointment, the advocate of, — the sin-offering for man. It arose from this free resignation of himself as the means of mercy, to the disposal of justice, that the Apostle says. "God hath made Him to be sin for us."

In these words, surely the doctrine of substitution, or atonement, is laid down with sufficient clearness :—there surely seems to be no ambiguity in the language—no room left for doubt as to its meaning. And yet, there are persons who, in the face of all this clearness and simplicity of statement, deny the grand doctrine which it so explicitly reveals—shut their eyes on the whole significance and typical nature of the Jewish dispensation—are obstinately deaf to the convincing proofs which it is so easy to bring forward, that the word in our text, translated “ sin,” actually means “ sin-offering.”—and would thus impiously, rather leave it to be imagined that the Son of God actually became defiled with sin, (for the words will admit of no other meaning, if that be not the one, which we attach to them) than, listening to the voice of truth and the plain sense of language, give up a favourite system, first suggested by Satan, for marrying so far as he could, the merciful purposes of heaven, and fostered by the pride, and corruption, and wilfulness of the human heart. Christian charity demands that we should pray for the enlightening of those, who have thus veiled their minds in a darkness so gross, but truth,—but the immortal interests of those, whom the craftiness of such men may

seduce, will not permit that we speak other wise than we have done, of that system of false doctrine which is built upon a perversion of language—which takes away all the magnificence and mercy of the Gospel,—ruins the hopes of man,—exhibits the whole structure of Jewish ceremonial, as a mass of cumbrous and unmeaning observances,—blasphemes the Deity and forms a stepping-stone to the infidelity which disavows the hope of immortality, and makes a mock at revelation. There is no language sufficiently strong, to expose the sophistry,—the disingenuousness,—the heartlessness of the men, who set themselves to work, with a view of mutilating the fair sanctuary which the Gospel has erected for the sinners refuge,—who, repeatedly driven with disgrace from the field of controversy, yet assume the tone of victory, and parade their oft-refuted absurdities with all the vaunting of the most indubitable triumph. We cannot be too cautious, how we verge on their impiety and folly;—we cannot hold too firmly the grand article of our faith,—the substitution of Christ for sinners;—we cannot pray too fervently for that simplicity of heart,—that subjection of pride,—that submission to the vouchsafed revelation of God, which is alone able to keep us from that fatal error, of re-

jecting the Lord that bought us with his blood.

The words before us, being most clearly decisive of the Saviour's having become a sin-offering for us, we proceed now—

II. To remark HIS FITNESS,—HIS INCISIVE FITNESS FOR THE OFFICE OF OUR SUBSTITUTE.

He knew no sin;—that is, He not only was guiltless, but He was possessed of essential and complete purity;—a purity and perfection of character, infinitely surpassing that of the angelic hosts, who, when subjected to the scrutiny of Divine inspection, “are chargeable with folly.” The Saviour knew no sin, moreover, in this sense,—it was impossible He should incur its stain; and this cannot be affirmed of any created being, how pure, how perfect soever.

It is obvious, at first view of the case, that the Being who was to act as substitute for man, and to appease by his sufferings, the Divine justice, must be “holy, harmless, undefiled,” and so in an infinite degree. Sin, as committed against the God of matchless purity, assumes the character of an infinite offence, which can only be atoned for by an infinite substitute undergoing the penalty.

which the myriads of mankind must otherwise have borne through eternity. Such a personage, could alone possess the purity to fit him for the office of man's peace-maker,—and the competency for a work so arduous,—a work which oppressed even the Divine Being who undertook it. The necessity of this qualification in our substitute was typified in the victims under the Jewish law, all of which were required to be perfect in their kind, in order to their fitness for representing the Great Sacrifice, that was, “in the fulness of time,” to be offered.

Thus we have seen, how necessary it was, for Him, who became a sin-offering for us, in the senses that have been mentioned, to know no sin. Thus was the perfectly pure, substituted for the polluted. And we must enter a little into this idea, in order to comprehend the full measure of that suffering which the Saviour underwent for man.—No one has ever dared, in express terms to assert, that defilement attached from the office he undertook, to our Redeemer;—but let us only consider the awful nature of the mere imputation of the guilt of millions. He was regarded, by the Divine eye, as an offender,—the curse of the broken law lay heavily upon him:—to be made the object of Divine displeasure and vengeance, involves ideas, more tremendous

than we are fully adequate to conceive. For a being of stainless purity, to take the form of sinful flesh,—to live in the midst of sinners, the perpetual theme of reproach,—the object of scorn, of suspicion, of accusation,—to suffer the ignominy of the lowest malefactor, and the pains of the most grievous offender,—presents a case of misery, to which there has never been a parallel. There was something, in spite of all that was sustaining and noble, in the arduous office of our Lord, so much allied to pollution, in being regarded by the universe as loaded with so heavy a guilt as ours,—so productive of suffering, that no notion we can form of the misery of human innocence labouring under the imputation of atrocious crime, can, in any way equal it. We are so apt to connect suffering with sin, that many, not among his most virulent enemies, probably looked upon the Saviour as some great offender, on the same grounds as the afflicted Job was thus regarded by his friends,—and the very suspicion,—the imputation, in the case to which we are alluding, if there were nothing stronger, must have added most severely to the bitterness of that cup, which our Redeemer drank for us.

These were among the most weighty of the griefs He endured for man. His bodily afflictions were great,—but it was the mind that

was most heavily pressed upon, when it became a prey to the torments which must have otherwise been the portion of the souls of men, when the Divine countenance and favour were withdrawn, — engines of spiritual might and infernal malice let loose upon the sufferer, — when sin and death darted their envenomed stings upon the victim, — when the flames kindled around the sacrifice, — when his soul became thus “exceeding sorrowful,” — and as the expression of an agony of which we cannot form the faintest conception, he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — Thus “for us men, and for our salvation,” became the most innocent of beings, the most suffering; — we feel our inadequacy to enter into the merits and mysteries of the case, — but it certainly does appear that his complete purity, which fitted him for the work he engaged to perform, was, in some way, the cause of much that he suffered from the imputation of our guilt, when he who knew no sin, “was made a sin offering for us.”

III. We now come to notice THE GRAND ADVANTAGE ARISING TO BELIEVERS, FROM THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE SAVIOUR IN THEIR ROOM.

“He hath made Him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in

Him." There were two things essential to man's complete restoration,—satisfaction for sin, and the acquirement of merit. Before he fell, our first parent was in a capacity, and under a necessity of meriting by continuance in obedience to a particular law, the favour of God. This was the covenant under which he was placed! It need not be demonstrated, (because Scripture is so clear, and experience so decisive on the subject,) how, by the Fall, our race lost the power of obedience, without becoming exempt from its necessity. Could some substitute have been found to suffer the penalty of sin, that would not have been enough;—he must also have been able to render to the Divine law, that perfect obedience, which men in their best estate after the Fall, could not render;—reward and happiness were attached by the original covenant, to obedience alone;—the terms were changed only in their form, by the dispensation of mercy,—the covenant of grace:—perfect obedience is still demanded—perfect righteousness must still be exhibited by the candidates for heaven;—but by the provisions of this second covenant, the righteousness of the Saviour is imputed to the believer, in the same way as the suffering and death, to which Christ submitted, are considered as having propitiated the Deity, in reference to the penitent sinner for, as in the

stead of man, the Redeemer underwent the curse of the law, so also, for him, he fulfilled all its demands. The dignity and perfection of the substitute, gave to His obedience for man, an infinite merit,--and as, through him, the Almighty is induced to avert the stroke of vengeance from the penitent, through him also, will He smile upon him in favour,—love him, as a reconciled Father,—receive him to His presence, and bestow on him the crown of life.

The Son of God was “made sin for us”—Why?—that “we should be made, or should become the righteousness of God in Him.” In a similar way to that, in which our guilt was imputed to him, is his righteousness ascribed to us. Our guilt communicated to him no pollution, nor does his obedience give to us, an essential righteousness;—we cannot take it to ourselves, and wear it with that feeling of self-applause, with which we might have exhibited merits of our own, could we have acquired them. In the one case, as in the other, the Saviour obeying, as well as suffering for us, we must ascribe all the advantage we enjoy to the grace, and mercy, and goodness of God in Christ. And much reason have we, for ever to adore these perfections of Deity,—for, believing in the Saviour, mark what are the invaluable blessings which accrue to us:—par-

don of sin,—for he endured its penalty,—and the law has no curse for us;—believing in Him, also; we become renewed and sanctified,—invested with more than the perfection of man's original righteousness, we are clothed with the beauty of Divine holiness, and the eye of Infinite purity can look on us with complacency, beholding in us a reflexion of Divine excellence. Rays of glory are made to shine in us, in which angels have no share:—they are indeed admirable works of the Most High,—but not for them did the Saviour yield obedience:—in having done so for us, and made over to us his merits, he hath clothed us with a dignity, and a sanctity, to which the most exalted of created intelligences can never attain.

Is there a heart that does not glow with love to Him who suffered,—who obeyed, that we might be delivered from a doom the most terrible, and put in possession of purity and happiness, the most nearly resembling those of Deity? Would to God that the grand truth we have been contemplating, produced upon all of us, any thing like those effects which ought to flow from it!—Should it not lead us all to place unlimited confidence in the Saviour, for our justification,—to avail ourselves, with simplicity—humility—gratitude, of the great resource provided for us by the Gospel? Should it not make us lay aside, at once, the

pretensions we are so apt to claim, on the plea of our merits? Should we not perceive at once, that, far from being able to do any works acceptable to the God who is to judge us, we cannot make satisfaction for one of a thousand transgressions;—that we not only require, in order to salvation, an oblivion of the past, but forgiveness of the imperfection of our best services—which it is only Divine grace that enables us to render;—and which, as coming at all from us, require to have thrown over them the white robe of Christ's righteousness, that their deficiencies may not appear;—that we may be fit guests at that banquet of immortality, which he hath prepared for his people? It is only, remember, through him, that we can become righteous;—only as the Almighty contemplates us, in union by faith to our great substitute.

Need I speak of the effect this fundamental truth ought to produce on our minds in relation to sin? Sin has, to our fallen natures, many attractions;—wears many a winning form;—offers many an alluring charm;—but look on him whom it laid on the altar, a suffering sacrifice;—and surely, independently of other causes why we should hate that great and bitter evil, we must do so, on account of the vast price at which we are redeemed from its consequences;—Never did Almighty power

effect such a work,—never Divine love do such a deed of kindness as that which our text records. Shall sin, henceforth, attract—deceive—or have dominion over us,—shall we cherish it in our bosoms,—sell ourselves its slaves?—O no!—for it made Him, who knew no stain, a sufferer, such as the annals of misery never offered to the eye of sympathy. And since one important end of the Saviour's sacrifice, was, that we might become righteous, let us sufficiently appreciate that holiness, of which the Almighty has thus shewn the indispensable necessity, to acceptance with Him. How great is its beauty,—how vast the blessedness to which it leads! Let us seek strength from above, that we may be fellow-workers with the Author of our justification,—let us seek to be advancing in similitude to our Redeemer, and long for the day, when dead for ever unto sin, we shall be invested with the life and loveliness of the righteousness that was purchased for us.

SERMON XV.

THE SAVIOUR'S LAMENT FOR JERUSALEM.

LUKE xix. 41, 42.

And when Jesus was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

HERE is a most interesting and affecting passage of Holy Writ, an exhibition of our Saviour's character, which must endear him to every mind not wholly dead to the impression of what is good and amiable. Our Lord was now nearly arrived at the close of his ministry, and when he uttered the words of the text, was riding into Jerusalem, not indeed in the fashion in which the Jews expected the Messiah to enter his capital, but "meek and lowly," with no magnificence of equipage and no pomp of retinue.

Now if we for a moment conceive the Saviour to have been only the best and most perfect of men, we may add, of angels,—conscious as he was of the most disinterested views in visiting our world, bearing blessings that were invaluable, to bestow upon our race;—what may we suppose would have been his feelings, after the reception he had experienced, the indignities he had suffered, the opposition, the persecution he had encountered in the execution of his most benevolent designs,—and having in view the tragical consummation that awaited him?—Could he, upon entering the scene of so much humiliation, insult, and suffering,—the abode of his malignant, inveterate enemies, whom no excellence of character, no beneficence of purpose, no evidences of a Divine mission could gain over or soften,—could he have refrained from indignant feelings at the base ingratitude which marked his treatment? Could he have repressed something like a feeling of joy, that the day was not far distant when the proud city he was about to enter, with its fiend-like inhabitants, should meet the doom due to their crimes?—But such was not Jesus;—and perhaps we may be permitted to draw an argument for his divinity from the fact that none but a Divine Being would, in the circumstances, have so deported himself, as did

he whose feelings and words are now before us! There is something in them so exquisite, so God-like, that all who delight to recognise the lovely character of the Divine Author of redemption, cannot fail most pleasingly to meet with him in this part of his history,—in this wondrous exhibition of a mildness and mercy such as created being never felt,—in this beautiful manifestation of the God “long-suffering and slow to wrath.”

Let us take a view of the most interesting spectacle which the text presents to us. Behold the Saviour descending the mount of Olives, with the towers and stately edifices of Jerusalem under his eye;—the temple, in all the splendour with which Herod had adorned it, towering above surrounding walls and palaces,—the streets crowded with the city’s population, collected by the report of the Lord’s approach. To an ordinary spectator, there is nothing in all this but a scene of grandeur, of pleasing contemplation;—but how did the Son of God behold it? In what manner did the sight affect him?—*He wept*,—and why did he weep? He saw indeed, Gethsemane and Calvary, but it was not the anticipation of these that operated on his feelings,—it was a contemplation of those for whom his last prayer on earth was put up,—his deadly foes. It was the fate temporal and

eternal awaiting them and their descendants, that was present to his mind,—a full knowledge of the mercies, the blessings, the glory and felicity they had wilfully put from them, --with the tremendous doom they were about fully to incur. He beheld Jerusalem, not as it then was—the seat still of much magnificence and political importance, but environed by Roman legions, torn by internal factions, wasted by famine, stormed, filled with slaughter; its habitations, its walls, its temple, levelled with the ground: the wretched survivors of its population driven into slavery, exposed to miseries more intolerable than the mere loss of life. Horrors like these, and others of still more dreadful import, drew from our Lord the tears which might even yet have washed away the deep stains “on the garments of the daughter of Sion,” had she not, with criminality more horrible than all the past, covered herself with his blood.

We know the intimate connexion that had for ages subsisted between God and Israel; the Saviour appears to have been their angel of the covenant, who more particularly communicated with, guided and preserved them; the season, long in mercy delayed, had now at length arrived—when wrath to the uttermost was to be visited upon this much-favoured but most ungrateful people,—when he who had

so long been their guardian, was to withdraw from them his wing, to scatter them from their land, to make them "a reproach, a byeword; a hissing" among all nations, to give them up to the long denounced curse on impenitence, to sever the union between them and him, their God and his people, and the parting, the giving up, were not without tears on the part of him who lost not by the separation, tears that the Divine attributes at length required mercy to give place to judgment, that "strange work" in the hands of the Son of God.

After informing us that our Lord, on beholding the city, wept over it, the Evangelist records him as saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes,"—words inexpressibly tender and compassionate; words much akin to blessing, instead of the cursing which to man might have seemed more appropriate, pity, even to tears, on account of the ruin impending over sinners, rather than any memory of their sins. The form of expression in the last verse of the text is evidently defective, but it is easy to supply the want which bitterness of spirit and the strong exercise of human feelings mingled with God-like energies seem to have left. **W**e may thus paraphrase this

most affecting address. Happy, O Jerusalem, would it have been for thee, hadst thou known after all thy former idolatries, rebellion, and obstinacy, at least in this last; brightest day of thy merciful visitation, "the things that concern thy peace;" happy would it be, if even *now*, at the last hour, thou wouldst join with thy vast population, the small band which is now shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Then mightest thou make thy peace, and the blood of the prophets and the rejection of the Messiah would not be required at thine hands! But this last hour is on the wing, and thou art not aware of its value, thine ears are deaf to the voice of instruction and warning. The brow of the 'Omnipotent is clouding with frowns, his hands already grasp the thunder; he is about to swear in his wrath, "that thou shalt not enter into his rest." All this thou heedest not, all this thou settest at defiance:—the 'hour is past, the oath is sworn,—hope, happiness, and opportunity have now fled from thee, and are beyond thy grasp; the veil is flung over thine eyes; impenitence and reprobation are stamped on thy forehead. Ere long thou shalt startle beneath the thunder which shall dash thee to pieces and consign thee to endless remorse and endless woe.—Who will not, with the Saviour, pay his tribute of sympathy and

grief in contemplating a doom so horrible and miseries so hopeless, as those denounced upon Israel, which we know to have been inflicted, and to be even now inflicting upon that wretched people?

But the text contains much more than mere matter of exciting our feelings, of awakening our sympathy for others. It speaks warning most solemn and affecting *to ourselves*. Why were the Jews condemned? Because they would not know and attend to "the things that concerned their peace," because they rejected the Lord of life and glory. Is there no Saviour offered to us—are there no matters belonging to our peace, exhibited for our serious consideration? There are.—The revelation of God is in our hands, and thence "the Mediator between God and man" addresses us. He tells us that we are corrupt by nature, and therefore miserable, that we are soon to be summoned to the presence of a Judge whom purity alone can conciliate, from whom guilt will hear only its doom;—he points out to us a medium of recovery from the ruin of the Fall, and of justification from the guilt of sin. As enemies of God, he shews us we can neither enjoy peace nor happiness;—he proposes reconciliation through belief in him the Saviour, commissioned to our world on an errand of mercy,—he commands us to repent of and

forsake sin, to enter upon the path of obedience and the cultivation of holiness, he points out the way of wisdom as those of peace, the road of virtue as alone strewn with the flowers of happiness;— he exhorts us to obey his instructions, that we may be placed out of the reach of sorrow in life, delivered from the fear of death, and made meet for a blessed immortality. Is it not a truth “worthy of all acceptance,” that these things concern our peace? and what is our conduct respecting them? Are we receiving them with gratitude, attending to them with diligence, or, like the Jews, do we refuse to know them, do we avert from them our regards and occupy ourselves with objects that will destroy our happiness and plunge our souls in perdition?

But further;—there is a *day* mentioned in our Saviour’s words, a season referred to, in which these things are placed within the reach of our acceptance. This day, this season, are in general, the term of human life, the time granted by our God for accepting his offers of mercy, for thus consulting our present and future interests, for “working out our salvation” “in the strength of him “who worketh in us”

There are peculiar times and circumstances in the life of man distinguished by opportuni-

ties and advantages as to the concerns of religion, which the text leads us to consider as more properly expressing our Lord's meaning in the words before us. There can be no doubt, humanly speaking, that there are critical points and seasons in the characters and lives of men, when a serious attention to religion, which is at all times a miracle effected in the soul by Divine grace, seems (if the expression may be tolerated,) more natural, and to possess greater facilities in relation to the mind than at other periods and in different circumstances. There is a time which may, more particularly than any other, be denominated "a time of love and of merciful visitation." There is a time when the Spirit and grace of God are at work with the mind, which no one will hesitate to pronounce, if not alone, certainly most favourable to an effectual concern about "the things which belong to our peace:"—a time when we enjoy in abundance the means of grace, when the conscience and the heart are the subjects of religious impression; and this is a period at which the offers of salvation should be immediately closed with, when prayer should abound, when the farther influences of the Spirit of God should be implored; then the Saviour is near,—may be found of those who seek him; then peace

may be secured, and heaven won as the eternal portion.

But these advantages last not for ever, nay do not always continue to the close of life ; - these precious seasons, if neglected, will be withdrawn ;— even before we descend to the darkness of the tomb, these things which involve our peace “ may be hid from our eyes.” We have an awful warning of the possibility of this in the case of Jerusalem. As from *it*, so from *us*, may the grace of God be withdrawn, if we improve it not. Doomed to lives of impenitence and deaths of despair, the despisers of God’s mercy may be left to fill up the measure of their guilt. Is not this a tremendous doom, to be left to the depraved workings of a corrupt heart, to unbelief and irreligion with all their horrible train of misery and ruin ? Let this awful idea, this consequence of impenitence and obstinate rejection of mercy, sink down into our hearts, and remain there as a warning lest we fall into like condemnation, lest we be abandoned by God to our natural blindness, our natural insensibility and hardness of heart.

This is our day ;—it is at various stages with us, dawning upon some, brightly shining upon others, verging towards evening with the rest. And this is a subject connected with consider-

ations of such vital importance, of such deep interest to us all, that I know no resource of language equal to its due enforcement upon our notice. The ideas it furnishes are, the rapid flight of our time, the infinite value of every hour, every moment, when viewed, as we always ought to view them, in relation to eternity. Each of these invaluable portions of time, of probationary season,—each of these opportunities of effort, of improvement, of salvation lost, robs us of blessings which may never return, removes us a degree from the light of heaven, and brings us nearer the verge of death's shades and darkness. Sin gains ground; strengthens its influence in the soul, the attractions of heaven's happiness become less powerful, and the mind grows more strongly determined towards the gloomy end of its sinful indulgences, as it suffers the day of grace to wear away; and it becomes extremely improbable, that he who has not been won by the beauties and first warmth of its rising, nor enlightened and fructified in his understanding and heart by its noontide influences, will, in the coldness and declining rays of evening, avail himself of the few moments that remain for him. Let us dread delay, let us beware of trifling;—they present a sad indication of the state of the heart, they incense even infinite mercy, they will weary out even

the Saviour's patience, they will end, if persisted in, in "the things that belong to our peace being for ever hid from our eyes." At the same time that we wish to impress this upon the mind, be it observed, that though it is never too early in our day of life to avail ourselves of our advantages, and though it is deemed highly necessary to caution against an opposite conduct by giving a view of its extreme danger, it is not meant to discourage those who, even at the eleventh hour, feel anxious about their soul's peace, who have slumbered through the morning and the noon, and are opening their eyes towards the evening of the day of salvation. From this lethargy the mighty hand of God does sometimes awaken the sleeper, and his awakening in these circumstances, will be such, that he will not stand in need of much cautioning not to give way again to slumbers so dangerous.

Let us now most seriously ask ourselves the question barely proposed in a former part of this discourse,—do we know, that is, do we *consider and attend to*, after having learned what they are, "the things that belong to our peace?" Are we, on good grounds, at peace with ourselves and with our God? Are the truths of religion familiar to our minds, operative in our conduct;—do we feel we have so embraced them that they are our comfort, our

guides, the purifiers of our hearts, — are we assured that living by, we shall happily die in them? Some of us there are, I doubt not, thus blessed; the consideration of a subject like this, while it makes us feel our happiness, rejoice in and be thankful for it may, through God's blessing, excite us to a deeper concern and awakened diligence about matters so eternally important.

But its chief use and design are, if there be any present among us insensible to, and wilfully ignorant of the claims of religion, heedless of visitations of mercy, deaf to the Saviour's voice, allowing — "the things that concern their peace" no time and no attention, — to arouse such from slumber, to call upon them to reflect on what is meant by an "accepted time," and "a day of visitation," to make them aware how valuable a thing is spiritual peace, how miserable all must be who are at war with God, and with their own best interests.

To close the subject, we observe the striking testimony it affords us to the great importance of religion; to *this*, men are lamentably insensible, not considering the unappreciable value of immortal souls. Our Lord tells us that these matters, little as they are thought of on earth, are not slightly regarded in heaven, when he informs us that there is joy in those celestial regions over even one repenting sinner.

But mark his views on this head most impressively exhibited in our text: behold him weeping over Jerusalem, when its day of hope and trial and forbearance was past: in like manner may we imagine him weeping over every soul about to sink into the utter darkness. He weeps over those who see nothing lamentable in their own condition, who are averting their faces from the light, in the midst of knowledge and opportunity, remaining obstinately unconverted and at enmity with God. Before he withdraws from them his grace long abused,—before he gives them their discharge from his guidance and his care, and consigns them to the fate they have sought, to reap as they have sown,—he bestows on them one last parting look of mercy and compassion,

Jerusalem, and how applicable to their case the language he addressed to it—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Are our souls then to be trifled with? Is religion a thing to be slighted? Shall we allow opportunities of salvation to pass by unheeded? Ought not the view of a weeping Saviour to make us mourn for ourselves, mourn in time, before the inevitable ruin threatened to the guilty inhabit-

ants of Jerusalem be denounced against our obduracy? The mild and precious dew which descended at the close of their day from the Saviour's eyes, damped not the flames about to be kindled around their city and themselves; and when other and fiercer fires begin to prey upon the souls of the finally impenitent, no tears of their own, not even the parting ones of heavenly mercy will quench, but will rather increase their fury. O may we then be wise, while the day lasts, may we secure the peace of our souls before its close, when the night of darkness and despair cometh, "in which no man can work!"

SERMON XVI.

GOD'S FAVOUR, THE ONLY SOURCE OF
HAPPINESS.

PSALM IV. 6.

*There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance
upon us.*

THE psalm which contains these words was probably composed by David, when driven from his throne and city by the treason of Absalom, he fled, with the friends who adhered to him, from the violence of his unnatural son and his rebellious subjects. The circumstances and prospects of the Psalmist at this distressing period of his life, if contemplated in any earthly point of view, were melancholy and hopeless indeed. His beloved child in arms against him, backed by a vast proportion of the armies and people of Israel, —himself, driven from his favourite abode, the city of God, the appointed place of wor-

ship, where dwelt the symbols of divinity ;—compelled, in old age, to flee for his life, with every human probability of fleeing in vain ;—the grievous sins too of former years, recalled in bitterness to his memory by these signal chastisements :—we can scarcely imagine more pungent sorrow than his, or calamities more heavy than fell to his share. But though banished from his capital and his throne, David felt that he was not banished from, nor forsaken by the God whose paternal rod now pressed heavily upon him ;—though around him were darkness and trouble, he felt the good hope that the darkness would pass away,

—that the evening of his days would yet close in calmness,—that his empire and his people were not rent from him for ever. We may well imagine the fears and the despair of those about him, whose faith was not like his own, — who were unaccustomed to look beyond outward appearances and human probabilities, and to the habitual reference of piety to Divine power and providence. We may imagine them saying, “ Who will shew us any good ? ” — How shall we now escape, when “ all refuge seems to have failed us ? ” — And what is the answer which David returned to these murmurings, these desponding complaints ? He directs his followers to have

recourse to the duties of religion, to put their trust in God, and then at once points out to them, the source and means of comfort, in the prayer, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."—This light had before illumined to him many a dark day,—had been joy and guidance to him in his many wanderings,—had shone on him in many an hour of peril,—in many a season of sadness. — he felt that it was now about to arise upon him again, through the clouds by which for a time it had been concealed, and his soul within him was glad, and his heart felt confident.

Such was David's prayer;—such was his never-failing source of peace and happiness. Such, too, may be ours; if we adopt the one, we shall enjoy the other. Each of us, though not like the Psalmist, the monarch of a mighty empire, may possess what is infinitely more valuable than the brightest jewel of a royal crown, or the widest extent of territory; we may possess the friendship of David's God, — may have His favour for our better than regal portion;—the light of His countenance may shine on us, and become the sun of our spiritual horizon.

"There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of

thy countenance upon us."--There are two facts which these words suggest to us, and to which I shall now solicit your attention

I. In the first place, THAT MEN IN GENERAL ARE ALWAYS MAKING THE INQUIRY, *Who will shew us any good?* OR, IN OTHER WORDS, ALWAYS SEEKING, BUT NEVER OBTAINING FROM WORLDLY SOURCES, SOLID HAPPINESS.

II And the second is, THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE SOURCE, WHENCE TRUE HAPPINESS CAN BE DERIVED.

I. With regard to what was to be esteemed THE SUPREME GOOD, there prevailed among the wisest men of ancient times nearly two hundred different opinions; a sufficient proof that though diligently sought for, it had not been found. Men have been, in all ages, and many are now, fruitlessly making the inquiry of our text and unsuccessfully, because injudiciously pursuing the object. It is this inquiry,-- it is this pursuit, which employ, and interest, and agitate the world. To earthly objects and human agents, is the question too often addressed,--to objects of time, is the pursuit directed. But essential good resides not in them, real happiness cannot flow from

them. The blessing sought for mocks the inquirer, and baffles the most active in the search. Does it seem to adhere to one spot, to take some definite shape?—that spot is no sooner arrived at, and that form grasped, than the desired object is seen on another station, and embodied after another fashion;—and man goes on, from place to place, and snatches one illusion after another, and his hopes are disappointed, and his toils unrewarded, “he walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain.”

And the case which has now been stated, is, in all main respects, the same with the various classes, and in the varied circumstances of mankind. Probably, it is readily admitted that the poor, the diseased, the friendless, the captive are never likely to gain the grand object of human pursuit, and may, with much suitableness to their circumstances, continually make the most despairing inquiry, “Who will shew us any good?”—But suppose some favoured being of our race to possess all that time can give;—a frame cast in the mould of beauty, and animated with the vigour of the soundest health,—endued with a mind to which nature has been lavish of her bestowments, and highly susceptible of all the graces of cultivation, and blessed with a disposition the most favourable to enjoyment;—and let

the world open to him all her stores,—let the mine seem to have been enriched with its wealth but for him, and pleasure clothed with her fascinations but for his sake,—let the homage of mankind be centred upon him, and every tongue call him blessed :—let the captive in the dungeon sigh for liberty, let the poor long for wealth, the afflicted for a respite from sorrow,—*he* has nothing to long for,—all things are his,—and yet, what is the feeling of his heart,—what the language of his retirement,—the secret he confides to the friend of his bosom? It is, “Who will shew me any good?” Yes,—though he dwell in a palace and walk in a paradise, the abode does not prove a resting-place;—the flowers of his Eden have ceased to please his eye, the fruits have palled upon his taste; and besides all this, he feels that he must soon leave his mansion for a narrower house, and all the animation, and the sweets of life, for the silence and the loathsomeness of death; and where is he to be hereafter? is the grave to be his only abode, and corruption his only portion?

It is because then, happiness is sought only from worldly sources, and good, from the things which perish, that possession never rewards the seeker, that enjoyment never crowns with its fulness the multitudes who court it. And can it be otherwise, when that

which is immortal seeks its good in that which is but for a season,—can it be otherwise, when the spirits who have been by their disobedience, banished from their original inheritance, seek to make their homes in the desert of their exile,—and to satisfy an appetite, insatiable by all save heavenly food, with the wild and unwholesome growth of the wilderness, instead of aspiring to the good which sin had lost them, and again to partake of “the bread and the water of life?”—No—while man seeks below, that which can be found only on high,—while his perverted affections cling to the things which can be seen by the eye, and touched by the hand of flesh,—while his vitiated appetite feeds on husks, instead of the food of his Father’s house, those affections will never meet a return of gratification,—that appetite never be satisfied, and the inquiry never cease to be hopelessly made, “Who will shew us any good?”

II. We are prepared then, for the conclusion that there is but one source, whence true happiness can be derived, and that source is pointed out to us in the words of the Psalmist, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” There was a period when this fair creation which now affords to the eye

so much of beauty and of order, was “without form and void.” It was when “darkness overspread the face of the deep.” But ere the first day in the march of time closed, a mighty change had been effected upon the confused and turbid mass; that change was produced when “God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” This was the first result of “the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters.” It was, as this light was developed, and separated, and concentrated, that the creation grew beneath its Almighty Author’s hand, that beauty, and fertility, and arrangement, being diffused over all things, God pronounced that they “were good.” It is from influences and effects like these, that happiness has always been associated with the idea of light, and its reverse represented under the figure of darkness. But there is a light, better, more cheering, more effective, than that which first arose so auspiciously upon the new creation. “Truly,” says the wise man, “the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;”—but there are beams sweeter to look upon, and a luminary more glorious, more pleasant than the sun in the natural heavens. It is the favourable aspect turned towards man of Him, at whose word, gloom and darkness first fled away. And such as was the great deep, ere the light dawned,—

such as were the palace of Pharaoh, and the shores of Nile, when, at the lifting of Moses' rod, darkness overshadowed the guilty land ; such too, as was the host of Egypt pursuing God's people, when His dark cloud hung over their array, and the heart of the warrior failed within him, and " the chariot wheels drave heavily ;"—such, but more dark, more desolate is the soul of man withering under the frown of his Maker, in unrepented, in persevering sinfulness,—in the love of earth and its objects, to the exclusion of God, and the blessings He offers. This is the natural state of our fallen race. But we are privileged to possess a revelation of mercy, in which, recovery from that state, so miserable, so hopeless, is offered to us,—by attending to the directions of which the favour of our Creator, forfeited by sin, may be restored, and reconciliation effected through the merits of the Saviour of ruined man, and the light of our Sovereign's pardon, the beams of our Father's love, again may arise upon us. Its first ray visits the soul, when, upon repentance of sin, and return to duty in the exercise of holy dispositions imparted by Divine grace, the voice of mercy and reconciliation whispers " thy sins are forgiven thee " And O how then does the aspect of the mind and the heart change ! The different face of the landscape, beneath the gloom of a wintry

night, and the rays of the summer sun, affords a contrast as great as nature can afford; but, when that light dawns upon the human soul, which has no fierceness of ray to parch, like the natural sun,—no chillness, like the moon in the heavens,—sheds none of those malignant influences which men have feared from the stars,—but enlivens, beautifies, fertilizes, blesses the soil that was before barren, and cheerless and accursed, what resource is there, in figurative language, in human imagination and conception, to give any thing like the idea of the new moral creation, the restoration of the image and the favour of God? He who placed the sun in the firmament to give light to the world, deigns Himself to “arise and shine” upon the desolate heart of each returning prodigal,—“sorrow and sighing flee away,” sin is forgiven, and all the blight, and all the misery, and all the thick darkness of sin, are chased away.

The inquiry of those on whom has risen this blessed light, ceases to be “who will shew us any good?” They have found that which the many are in vain seeking,—which they themselves once fruitlessly sought. God, who “understandeth the way of happiness, and knoweth the place thereof,” has revealed it to them, as residing in His favour and blessing,—has pointed out to them the paths of

wisdom, as those which lead to it,—has exhibited to them the “fulness of joy, the pleasures for evermore,” which are to be found with Him, and now they behold suspended to their view, as the ample reward of all effort, of all toil, the crown of glory, such as earthly monarchs never wore; the true riches, such as human treasury never contained, the spiritual food, such as never grew beneath mortal culture. The soul has vast desires, but it cannot long for more than these can furnish,—it hungers and thirsts after the materials of enjoyment, but, partaking once of these, it can hunger and thirst no more. To be at peace with God, to be accepted by Him,—to know, to feel assured that we are so, is the good which we all need,—the only one that will not miserably ill repay our seeking,—that will not disappoint our hopes. Possessed of blessedness like this, we shall taste in all their richness, we shall relish in all their fulness, whatever the earth does afford of lawful, and therefore of real enjoyment; for it is the blessing from on high, that gives to temporal advantages all their value and efficacy,—it is only as we are able to recognize them as coming from His hand, the hand of our Father, that they can in any way benefit us. But it is chiefly in the absence of all earthly good, that the light of God’s countenance shines most brightly, and most benign-

nantly. It was in extreme adversity that the prayer of David was put up, for the comforts of this manifestation;—they were vouchsafed, and under all the calamities which threatened him from without, gladness took up its abode in his heart. The blessings which religion imparts, in fact, put their possessors out of the reach of adversity; their souls are safe, their immortal interests secure,—what ill can betide them? Some sources of enjoyment may be cut off,—inroads may be made by misery into our human feelings, but the fountain of our happiness, the sanctuary of our safety, can never be dried up,—can never be invaded;—and hence, the security, the contentment, the peace which Christians may always enjoy.—God, our friend; His providence, our keeper; He who died for us, our judge; immortal felicity, our portion; heaven our home; what is there in the compass of human or infernal influence, that can mar our prospects, or disturb the calm of our happy state?

No cause has had so many sufferers as Christianity,—so many and such mighty persecutors;—but no cause can boast such devoted victims,—such costly, such willing sacrifices made for its sake. What was it that sustained the “noble army of its martyrs,”—that bore our frail nature up, under the horrors so terrible

to flesh and blood, by which, in their warfare, it was assailed? No obstinacy of opinion, no force of prejudice, no power of fancy, no height of enthusiasm: it was "the light of His countenance" in whose cause they suffered, whose reproach they bore. He smiled on them, while hell frowned,—He displayed to them the fruits of victory,—He furnished them with God-like firmness, and they heeded not the bloody conflicts through which they were called to pass, nor startled at the death of agony which opened a way to the bliss in store for them.

The source of peace and happiness, of which we are now treating, is distinguished by nothing more than this,—it comes in with its most efficient aid when all others fail. In loss of fortune, or friends,—in sickness, in pain, when the world will not and cannot help, when what promised much has been withdrawn; in loneliness, in destitution, in the weakness and sorrows of age, in the approach of death, and the prospect of judgment, then will arise upon the soul of the believer in Jesus Christ, who has chosen the favour of God for his portion, the light which will illumine the darkest paths of his pilgrimage, and chase the shadows from the tomb. This will soften every hardship, by the assurance that all will be well at

the last, when the night shall have passed away and the day dawned, of which the sun shall never go down.

Let us close this subject by the solemn appeal to our own hearts, as to the good *we* value and seek. Are we among the many--the unwise many, who, because we are asking of the world, of the objects of time and sense, what they cannot give us, are still saying, by our restless pursuit of something we have not yet attained, "Who will shew us any good?" Is *our* prayer, the prayer of David? Are we living in the consciousness that this greatest and best of Beings looks on us with a friendly eye,-- bears to us a father's love, and can we say to him, in all time of our need, as children accustomed to his care and acquainted with his blessings, "Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us?" --If not, he that would call us wise, or happy, or safe, would only mock our wretchedness with flattery: our own hearts will misgive us if we attempt to practise on ourselves so gross a delusion,--and though now, we were to succeed in deceiving ourselves, there are exigencies awaiting us all, in which the voice of truth will compel us to hear, while it tells us that we are friendless and miserable.

O Thou who art the source of that light which alone can illumine the natural darkness

and dreariness of our souls! Thou, "whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness better than 'life,'"—draw us to Thyself, the fountain of the blessedness we cannot obtain without Thee! If Thou art enriching us with temporal blessings, let us not place our good in them, but be led, by these beams Thou art shedding on our path, to Thee the glorious Sun.

If Thy providence smile not on us in the gifts of "the life that now is," let us not weary ourselves with vain enquiries, and fruitless exertions for the things which Thou deniest, because they are not good for us, but seek the gifts of Thy grace, the only goods, and which we have but to ask in order to obtain. Under the light of Thy favourable countenance, may we pass our day of life; when our night cometh, may *it* guide us to the tomb, and may our eyes open upon its beams, on the morning of the resurrection, when, "to the upright there shall arise an everlasting light" of glory and of blessedness!

SERMON XVII.

THE CONSOLATION OF THE CHRISTIAN, IN
THE VIEW OF MORTALITY, IS SUITABLE
AND SURE.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 1.

*We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle
were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house
not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

OUR mortality is a fact no less certain, than
impressive and affecting: our present state of
being is that of changing and perishing crea-
tures in a world where all is changing and
doomed to perish.—All the pathos and ex-
pressiveness of language,—every variety of
figure and term, have, in all ages, been put in
requisition to describe and bemoan this sad
constitution of ourselves—this mournful des-
tiny of all with whom we are conversant. The

writings of sages have been ever eloquent and profuse on this topic;—the pencil of the moral painter has filled the canvass of his description with every aspect and lineament of gloom which the imagination, brooding over infirmity and death, could devise.

But in this, as in all matters of importance and interest, we find one paragraph, nay one phrase of the Scriptures of inspiration more replete with truth and meaning than the pages, —the volumes, —the systems dictated by merely human intellect: and this is not their only, their chief feature of excellence,—it is, that while in the most pathetic terms,—in language the most eloquent, beautiful and descriptive, they dwell on the sorrows, the sicknesses and the close of life, they contain that which many an uninspired penman never dreamed of,—which none could grasp, or develop, or prove,—the promise of immortality, —the assurance of a system of things in which infirmity, decay,—dissolution, shall have no place. It is needless to multiply quotations in support of what is now asserted—the text is amply sufficient: “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

These words present the following subjects for consideration ;

I. THE NATURE AND FATE OF THE PRESENT ABODE OF OUR SOULS ;

II. THE BELIEVER'S PROSPECTS AND CONSOLATION UNDER ALL THAT IS DISHEARTENING AND MELANCHOLY IN THIS CONSTITUTION AND FATE OF THE BODY ; and

III. THE FULL ASSURANCE WITH WHICH THESE PROSPECTS MAY BE ENTERTAINED.

I. With regard to the first of these heads.—It is obvious that the bodies now the tenements of our souls are of a temporary nature : they are in the text presented to our view under the figure of tents, which the traveller erects for repose during the night, or as shelter in the heat of the day from the rays of the sun, and which when the light returns or the cool of the evening comes on, are taken down, as of no further use.—In the book of Job they are described as houses of “ clay,” having their “ foundation in the dust,” or loose sand of the parched desert, and as neither designed nor fitted to endure but for a brief season ; in like manner the habitations assigned by God to the soul of man during the period of its

probation on earth, bear about them evident marks that, they are but of temporary duration*;—they grow,—attain maturity, and at length decay; whether, as of old, the days of human pilgrimage extended to a thousand years, or, as at present, to their ordinary limit of threescore years and ten.

And this reminds us, that they are not only temporary, but *frail*;—it cannot be pronounced that they will hold out during any given series of years;—nay for the day and hour which* are passing: exposed to numberless accidents,—little adapted to resist violence or bear up under injury, the day which dawns on them in health and vigour, may, ere the close of its short course, behold them smitten by disease and sunk in death;—and this latter is sure, sooner or later, to be their doom: the elements which compose these our bodies are destined to separation,—to return to dust, to air, to water. Combined and arranged, they form various gradations of strength and beauty, but no sooner does death make them his victims, than all shades and degrees and adjustments commence their process towards a mass of corruption, on which no eye can look but with horror, and which ends in that utter dissolution and dispersion which the creating voice in the beginning called into union and form: such is the least

formidable result of the heavy curse denounced against sin,—the defacement of the divine image,—the destruction of the frame that was abused to purposes of sin;—such are among the most familiar yet most tremendous, most affecting facts that press upon our notice. The soil on which we walk, which produces our food, furnishes materials for our abodes, but is at length to receive us to its bosom, is not only strewed in many a place with wrecks and ruins which mark the scite of palaces,—of cities,—of memorable events;—it consists, in no small proportion, of all that remains of the bodies of those myriads of human beings that have trodden it before us,—of those bustling crowds of individuals once high in hope, and busy in project—but of whom, the wise and the noble,—the fair and the renowned, have now no distinction, nor name in the dust to which all have become assimilated: beneath our feet is many a ruined tabernacle, which its immortal inhabitant has long left desolate,—many a house of clay which has mouldered into a formless heap,—and we who are now calling those to remembrance,—who live among ruins, and tread upon graves, are soon to add our bodies to the wrecks around us;—of this we are all certain;—we all in some degree, calculate on the event;—not only does the experience of

what has happened to others bear testimony to this our fate, but who is there that has not by some pang, some sickness, some infirmity, been admonished that he must soon put off the body, which thus reminds him of its mortality?

II. Having thus shortly contemplated the nature and destiny of our mortal frames,—we raise our eyes from the grave to the heavens,—from death to life,—from the ruins of the present tenements of our souls to their rebuilding in glory, beauty and imperishableness;—from the earthly tabernacle, “to the house not made with hands,—eternal in the heavens!” We are attached to these abodes of clay,—frail, diseased and corruptible though they be; with them is associated many a delightful sensation and remembrance;—all our ideas of happiness are inseparably allied with the body as a medium and partaker of that happiness;—indeed, we can form no definite idea of existence separate from some similar companion of the soul to that which we now so fondly cherish; the doctrine, therefore, of the resurrection of the body is one which seems necessary to our conception of the blessedness of another state of being: the felicity of the saints in heaven will not be complete till the summons of the last trumpet,

—till the mighty power of God shall have commanded the grave “to give up its dead.”

There is one idea in connection with this subject that must present itself to every mind; a renewed and glorified spirit must have a renewed and glorified body; it could not endure the burden of that corrupt and sinful flesh to which in the present state of probation, the soul is attached: while then it is to be invested with the same body as this we now bear,—so transformed,—so purified,—so prepared will be its old associate, that, except some sufficient testimony which the risen frame will bear of its identity and real sameness, there will be no trace of those earthly tabernacles in which the heir of immortality at present resides; infirmity,—pain,—age,—evil propensities and habits, will no longer be among its attributes; but immortal freshness and vigour,—security,—spotlessness and undisturbed bliss.

Now mark the description which the apostle gives of the two states of the body to which we are adverting; the one is, “our house of this tabernacle,”—as if He who originally formed it, had abandoned its continuance and propagation to man; and assuredly these tabernacles we now inhabit are of human building; sin has made them what they are,—has defaced the original temple,—degraded it into a shed,

—a comparatively ruinous and formless abode; but what is the body to which we are invited by Christianity to look forward? It is “a building of God,”—evidently divine in every part and detail of its workmanship; possessing, in their highest perfection, all the beauties and completeness of unfallen nature, with many a grace and bright ray of glory super-added by redeeming love.

It is “a building of God,”—divine in another sense; it will possess a strong affinity to that human form in which the Son of God reigns at his Father’s right hand; it is a direct promise that, “when he who is our life shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”—And the same glorious change is intimated in the words “we all, as in a glass, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.”—St. Peter also speaks of the great and precious promises of the Gospel, as making us “partakers of the Divine nature;”—which promises, it is scarcely necessary to remark, have respect also to the future glory of our raised bodies.

Again; our present bodies are earthly,—“dust they are, and unto dust they shall return;” they are sustained by earthly aliments, their tendencies and affections are towards the things of earth. How different the abode that awaits our translated souls! It is “a

house not made with hands,"—that is, not made of corruptible materials, nor in any way debased by human workmanship; (not made with hands is a Hebrew mode of expression, whereby is signified, every sort and the highest degree of excellence.)—There is in it nothing of the defect and short-coming which adhere ever to human workmanship;—its materials are beyond the reach of any foe to injure,—no arm, no weapon can be stretched out against it to deface or destroy;—it is built on the word and promise of God;—its chief cornerstone is Jesus Christ, and as likely is it that the glorified body of the Saviour should again be fixed on the cross, or laid in the sepulchre, as that "the house not made with hands" should share the fate of earthly structures.

"Not made with hands," designates also,—what may be, perhaps, denominated the almost immateriality of the future dwellings of our souls; it is possible that matter may be so subtilized,—so wrought upon by the master operations of Him who is "excellent in working," as to approach as near perfection as any thing can attain. The same forms, indeed, after the most perfect and spiritual model, will still be ours, though fitted, in every point of view, to contribute to the happiness, and assist the attainments of the Spirit: we shall like the angels of heaven, and yet different

from them;—not so far changed, either in occupation or pursuit, or enjoyment, as to differ in every particular from what we were on earth.

There is still another feature of contrast in these bodies we now inhabit, and those which shall be ours at the resurrection of the just; the one are doomed to dissolution,—the other “eternal in the heavens;” the former are tents composed of the most perishable materials, and intended only for temporary purposes;—the latter are buildings,—are like the abodes of the Israelites in the cities of Canaan in comparison to the tents which they occupied in the wilderness; or to that splendid and durable temple which superseded the tabernacle in the service of the Jewish ritual: but these habitations have mouldered, the walls of Jerusalem and its palaces have been long ago razed to the ground,—the temple itself has yielded to the violence of man, and not one stone remains to tell of its glory and beauty. But the houses in the heavens,—the bodies which are to dwell “in the city that hath foundations,” shall never fail;—no, these temples of the renewed soul have been consecrated, even on earth, as temples of God’s Spirit, and this is the principle of their eternal life,—this, the earnest of their endless duration; the destroyer, the agent of dissolution, *sin*, is no more;

death is remembered only as a conquered foe, and the grave associated with remembrances of deliverance and triumph; and this state of the glorified body and renewed soul, is permanent in all respects,—neither can it suffer by any lapse like that which wrought the ruin of our first nature. The heavenly paradise, besides its many features of superiority has this one,—that it cannot be forfeited and lost as was the earthly.

III. Such are the hopes,—such the prospects of the Christian;—let us just glance at the foundation on which these hopes rest. “We know,” says the Apostle,—it is an object of which he is well informed and assured, about which he treats; he speaks on the authority of God’s word: his title to a renovated body is as good as that, which through the merits of the Saviour he has to “a new heart and a right spirit;”—there, in express terms, the truth, the Divinity is pledged to redeem him from the power of the grave, as well as from the power of sin. It is in “the flesh” that “he shall see God;” he looks for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body;—he has believed in the Son of God, and He is the Saviour of the body. He shall so change, so fashion the outward man, that it shall be like his own glorious body—celestial and eternal.

We know,—that is—our minds are made up, —are assured on this head; it is impressed on our souls as one of those ineffaceable ideas, some of which are common to every human mind; we feel with respect to our bodies, that attachment which makes us look forward to a renewed union,—that attachment which would not exist in our sanctification unless permitted and encouraged by the Spirit of God. The Redeemer bore our form, and by the sufferings of his body, snatched ours from corruption; nothing for which he died,—for which he makes intercession, can ever perish.

We know, too, as his children and creation; bearing on our brow, even, in our most forlorn state, some remains of his image, that he will have compassion on the whole work of his hands; on all on which he has made any thing like the impress of his own Divinity. And this we feel assured of,—that our bodies shall not be left in the dust of death, the perpetual prey of corruption—but that they shall rise again, with this only difference,—that being sown “natural,” they shall be raised “spiritual” bodies.

How delightful is it, my brethren, that these parts of knowledge which most deeply concern us, are those with regard to which we are permitted, to feel most confident! There is no better ascertained fact, than that we shall die

and see corruption;—our tents must be struck, and the spirit must go, dislodged and alone, to God who gave it. But while assured of this, we know, or may know also, that the day is hastening when we shall have a building of God,—“an house not made with hands, eternal and in the heavens:”—that that house shall be the abode to which our souls have been ever accustomed, and that both shall dwell in the mansions prepared by the departed Saviour. Mystery may hang over the doctrines of our faith,—over much of science,—over the first principles of our knowledge;—we understand not the union between soul and body, but we know it to be one of endearment and general happiness;—and we may as surely know, that our union is severed but for a time, at death—to take place again, with every circumstance of advantage and blessedness.

There are just two inferences, which, in conclusion, I shall deduce from this subject. The first I give in the language of inspiration: “Let us not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” The body is our grand seducer; on its accommodation and gratification we waste many an effort; we give to them by far too exclusive an attention. But let no one be vain of any distinc-

tions it may now possess, nor over solicitous for its temporal durability and enjoyment. The soul—the eternal interests, are apt to suffer by its ease, and the undue care we lavish on it;—let us bear in mind the corruption to which it is destined, and not deck too carefully, —and not be too vain of that, which the grave will ere long deface. Let us strive after the beauty of the soul;—look to its fitness for eternity—for parting with the body on such terms as will secure a happy re-union; its bad propensities let us detest and keep under,—and cherish those dispositions, and look forward to those prospects which will make it seem rather a burden and a confinement,—as that which causes our absence from the Lord;—which is our bar to the heavenly world;—which impedes our flight to the glorious land above the skies; and then we need not mourn, nor need any lament us, if we let it fall into the dust before it has known wrinkles, or tottered in age. The glorious sentiment of antiquity will revive in our souls, without the affectation and the cant which, in former times, accompanied its avowal;—the sentiment that those whom God most loves, he takes earliest to himself. One glimpse of the body that shall one day be ours;—one perception of the state and frame of the soul which shall animate that body, would give us desires after our

eternal inheritance, and make us anxiously long and pray to be with Christ;—to be clothed upon with our heavenly house, and become Citizens of the Jerusalem which is above;—conversant with the glories and the happiness which are not seen nor felt as yet.

Lastly.—Let us strive after a Christian assurance of the blessedness of another world; it does not do to leave this matter to chance,—to trust in general hopes, and ill-defined prospects; they will not sustain us when our tabernacles are falling in ruins about us;—it must be the habitual, the humble, though firm persuasion of our minds, that “death will be our gain;” and in order to this, our faith must be real and well-founded. “Faith is the evidence of things not seen,”—is the eye by which we may see the bodies which God is preparing for us;—faith in the Saviour can alone serve our bodies as it does our souls;—it must be an abiding principle, of which we can give a reason to ourselves, and, if need be, to others. But it must, also, be an *operative* principle;—thus only,—by doing the will of God, shall we derive comfort from any doctrine of our religion,—thus only shall we ascertain the seemliness of our faith:—without this, faith is dead,—our hope is vain;—body and soul shall sever in the thick gloom of despair, and meet in ter-

ror at the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us look then to the character of that belief we, with our lips, profess ;—the hold it has on our minds ;—let us look to our works : the things done in the body are to determine its fate and that of the soul, at the last day. May the result, to the one and the other, be a reception into the eternal rest, and sure abode that await the people of God !

ST MON XVIII.



MESSAGE AND DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTER OF RELIGION

2 CORINTHIANS V. 19

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though
God did by us seek you by us; we pray you, in Christ's
stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

THERE are few facts more evident than this one, that men, at least act as if they formed most erroneous judgments of the relative value of the various objects which solicit their attention. This is most apparently and decidedly the case, with regard to the two great classes of objects presented to the notice of mankind, — those which respect their present temporal, and future eternal existence. It is most obvious which, in general, is best attended to, — most loved and sought after; — which has the heart and the efforts: and yet is there no

ambiguity in the information we possess, *which* is the more important,—the more necessary. We have an inspired record which speaks the most decided, the most forcible language on this point,—we profess to believe its statements,—while we act as if there were no such record, or as if its statements were precisely the reverse of what they are. We pass by the folly of such conduct,—the infatuation which permits it, to think of *its peril*. The matter is one of no ordinary concernment,—it involves not our temporal life,—it respects the interests of the soul, which in eternity is to reap the fruits of our folly or wisdom, in time. The mistake we have in view becomes more dangerous as each hour passes over us. Let us pause, during the hallowed season for reflexion which the peaceful Sabbath day affords, and giving our minds to the things of religion, contemplate their unspeakable importance, and henceforth regulate our feelings and our lives accordingly. Of the importance of that to which our religion calls us, there are few more decided and impressive testimonies than our text affords; when treating of the ministers of religion, it says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”—May the blessing from on high accompany our meditations, that

we may discern the full import of the passage before us!

It will lead us to consider *three* general topics:—

I. THE NATURAL CONDITION OF MAN:

II. THE OFFER MADE TO HIM, IN SUIT-
ABILITIES TO THAT CONDITION:

III. THE OFFICE AND DUTY OF THOSE,
TO WHOM IT IS COMMITTED TO MAKE THIS
OFFER.

I. The natural condition of man may be gathered from history, from experience, from feeling, from the state of the world;—all which sources of information, confirm most decidedly, the testimony of the word of God. We must not contemplate our nature in the fictions of romance, nor through the medium of poetical imaginations, nor in the adornments with which pride would invest it;—cast the eye of examination over your own hearts, and the loveliness, the harmony and the perfection, with which fancy has not unfrequently endowed men, will fade away before the realities which exhibit only discord, deformity and weakness. What is history but a record of the crimes and consequent sufferings of mankind,—a record, in which the memorials of

uprightness, self-denial, magnanimity,—a deportment suitable to the knowledge of duty that was possessed, occur only as verdant spots in the desert, while all else is disorder and unbridled passion,—sensuality, cruelty, meanness, and deceit? And besides, how much of what is splendid and heroic, great and seemingly good, in the annals of the past, may be traced to motives far inferior to the great ones, of a sense of duty to God and man,—a perception of what was right, and becoming, and obligatory! When we look at present times, do we find the mass of mankind essentially better? Look at our superior advantages over the men that have preceded us, and shall we not find reason to conclude, the nature must be radically bad, which can resist the attractions of virtue when so clearly exhibited, and the demands of religion, when so powerfully and intelligibly enforced? But let us contemplate ourselves,—I mean, as we naturally are; suppose ourselves to act in all cases, as nature, left to herself, would prompt us;—shall we draw any inferences from a candid inspection, but such as accord with the doctrines of our Church, or what is the same, the testimony of scripture, on this head?—“that we are all gone out of the ways of duty and of holiness,—have left our first love,—fallen from our original perfection?—that to

do evil is ever present with, and natural to us, —and the grand difficulty how to perform from a sense of duty, that which is really good? And what a state is this in which we are! How must “he who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” regard us? —As enemies surely,—the objects of indignation,

the ungrateful abusers of bounty, —ripe for destruction. And what are our feelings towards him? Those of rebels to their sovereign, who would dethrone him if they could,

who are continually acting in opposition to his will, —spurning his authority, —who, if they seem to submit, it is through fear, —if they seem to pause in their audacious defiance, it is from a feeling that shows more of the baseness of the coward, than of a sense of error and incipient repentance. What is the condition of the world, —of the dwelling assigned to men? It proclaims a state of warfare with God, —it is the theatre of combat between the feeble creatures of a day, and *the Lord God Omnipotent*. Amidst much of surviving beauty and grandeur, accordingly, we find the blight of heaven’s curse, —in the sun which burns the earth and breeds pestilence among its people, —in the piercing winds, —the wasting tempests, —the destructive elements. Thus, from the sources that have been enumerated, do we learn that there is a

controversy between the creature and the Creator ;—that things are not as they were, when the seven days' wonders were finished, and God and man met and conversed together, and harmony was between them, and all around bare testimony to the peace and good understanding that subsisted between heaven and earth. O no !—misery triumphs,--disease ravages,—death reigns,—the frown of God is upon sin, and therefore sinners suffer. Does any one shrink incredulous, with offended pride, from the above statement, and think that our nature is wronged and insulted ?

We speak only as the word of inspiration speaks, and we entreat those who want complete conviction as to our statement, to place out of view adventitious circumstances, which make men to differ from each other ;—to contemplate our nature without education, without the social tie and order,—free from the numerous restraints of civilized life ;—and though we do not deem this necessary to conviction, yet, obstinate must be the prejudice, determined the unbelief of those, who after this contemplation, refuse to admit the natural state of man to be such as we have attempted to describe,—that God must be at enmity with him, and he with God,—that man is blind to the miseries of this state of warfare, and left to himself, would remain so till death.

judgment and eternity burst upon his view, shewing him the madness and misery of the impious conflict he had dared to risk with an almighty foe

II. But we come now to THE PROPOSITIONS OF PEACE SENT FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH,—to the offer of reconciliation, which originated in the matchless mercy of Him who had pity on the rebels he might have frowned into destruction.—And mark the goodness, the condescension of such an offer, proceeding from such a source! What need had he, who is supremely happy in himself, of the homage, of the services, of the duty and love of the creatures who had alienated themselves from him!—He wanted not their sacrifices,—“his are the cattle on a thousand hills,”—he wanted, not their incense,—their praises,—“thousands of angels bow before him,—ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him.”—The harps of seraphs yielded to him their melody,—the anthems of spirits that had never fallen, celebrated his perfections. What need then, of the feeble lisps of human worship,—of the jarring chords of human praise? The race of man, blotted from the creation, or doomed to hopeless woe,—their absence would not have left a perceptible void in the universe, nor their groans have interrupted the harmony

of heaven. But *pity* dwelt in the bosom of God, and to *pity* the sighing of the contrite heart, the tears of the penitent, the love of the grateful returning prodigal, the loyalty of the submissive rebel, were more acceptable than the music of angels,—more grateful than incense from the golden censers, in which strange fire had never mingled. O we cannot but venerate the perfection of the Divine character,—adore his power, his greatness, his holiness,—the majesty and dominion that are his; but there is a more touching, a more delightful, a more devoted feeling excited in the heart, when we consider Him, of whom “heaven is the throne and earth the footstool,”—whose chariots are the clouds, and in whose hand play the lightnings, stooping down to listen to the prayer of the mourning sinner,—laying aside the thunder, and taking up his abode in the soul that has begun to breathe out to him its wretchedness while He is absent!—We say not that sin was a necessary evil, nor that in any of its bearings it can be attended with beneficial result;—but there would seem, from what we know of the Gospel, to be somewhat more of interest felt by the Deity for the returning sinner, confiding in mercy, than might have been felt for man, remaining in innocence and integrity,—just as the human parent most fondly loves the erring child, who comes back from his

wanderings again, to repose on his bosom,—and the kind heart receives, with feelings of inexpressible delight, the returning love of an alienated friend. And if man be most God-like, most noble,—commend himself more to our hearts when he pardons the fault of his fellow man, and closes with him in reconciliation, what language shall we find to speak of the beauty of the Divine character, in the Gospel offer of reconciliation to our fallen race?—it is the love of God,—it “passeth all understanding.”—For mark, the offer came *from Him*, and could not otherwise come. Man expressed no wish for pardon, he evinced no feeling of guilt;—he dared to lift his voice in blasphemy to the heavens,—his thoughts, words, and deeds, were so many acts of defiance to his Creator; it was only by an expression of the Divine willingness for reconciliation, that the revelation of terms of peace, that reconcilment could be made and friendliness re-established. And it must be remembered, that in the circumstances in which God and man were relatively placed, however much the wished-for restored amity might be felt on one side, nothing but supreme wisdom and power, and infinite compassion, could have devised means, and set them at work to carry the wish into effect. Mercy and justice seemed at variance with each other;—the tender

attribute might plead, but the sterner perfection frowned denial;—a free, unpurchased pardon could not go forth to the sinner, because thus, holiness would have received a stain;—the law enforced its claims, demanded the death of the offender,—and the Divine rectitude stood pledged to vindicate itself from insult, and save itself from pollution. We cannot now enter upon the details of the plan that was devised for man's recovery,—for concluding peace, on terms consistent with the honour of the Almighty. We tell it in the brief language of Holy Writ, by which, we are informed “that God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition” that was between sinful man and a holy God,—“To us, who were aliens,—afar off, without God and without hope in the world,” he hath proclaimed peace, having made atonement for us. Thus again, may be made ours, peace with God, and all the blessings that accompany it. Man is now invited,—exhorted to return to the friendship and favour of his Father in heaven. Love is manifested towards him,—a scheme of mercy is revealed to him,

the most wondrous, most efficient, most fitted to touch his heart, to soften down his hostility, to bring him to the throne of grace in the attitude of a suppliant. Is there one who can resist these attractions to heaven and happiness,—that can refuse the robe of righteousness offered him,—the golden sceptre extended to him, in token of full pardon? Shall peace be offered us on such terms, purchased at such a price, and shall our hearts return no response of gratitude,—breathe no desire for reconciliation. Love, cherished by one mortal for another, not unfrequently gives rise to a kindred feeling which would not otherwise have existed;—and shall the love of God beget, in the heart of man, no return, no kindling glow? Surely, prior to experience, we should suppose such motives as the Gospel offers to affect the soul, secure of attaining the end. It should be enough, surely, to make the discovery of gracious and friendly intention on the part of God, and man should fly to receive the boon, and press forward to evince his gratitude to the Giver;—but in how many instances does the message of mercy fall upon the deaf ear, address itself to the insensible soul!—how often are the overtures of peace rejected, and the offers of love repaid only with a more bitter hatred! But not therefore, is the Divine compassion withdrawn; the love of God is proof,

even to the neglect, obstinacy, and repulse of its objects. Where man would retire in disgust, and leave the ungrateful despiser of his good offices to his fate, the love of God glows more warmly. He condescends *to beseech*, the Saviour of sinners has recourse *to entreaty*, that those for whom he died, would accept, from his hands, pardon and eternal life,—the friendship of him whose loving-kindness is better than life,—whose smile is happiness. And whence does this earnestness on the part of our heavenly Father, for the reconciliation to him of his disobedient children, arise?—doubtless it is part of the love with which he hath loved them,—but it flows chiefly, from a full view of their misery, while they remain enemies to him, “by wicked works.” He knows, and he alone can know, the full extent of this. It is this that throws so much of warmth, of force, of eloquent expostulation, into the warnings, the invitations of the Gospel:—“Why will ye die?” is the theme that inspires them. And let those who think lightly of the doom awaiting the impenitent in a future state, well consider this;—they believe not in such a tremendous fate as that of interminable woe, but why then the death of the Saviour? Why the entreaties of our merciful God? Why does he beseech, does he pray us, in reconciliation to him, to flee from the wrath to come?”—

Why, but that the miseries of time, and the pains of death, are nothing to the visitations of eternal vengeance, "to the worm that never dies, and the flame which is never quenched?"—O then, let us implore that God, by his Spirit, would incline our hearts to accept of mercy, to close with his terms,—to be at peace with him, while peace is offered,—to avail ourselves of the love which dictated the means of grace, and gave rise to the hope of glory, before death, the messenger of wrath, hurry us to the banishment, to the prison-house, whence there can be no return and no release.

III. The words of the Apostle before us, lead us, in conclusion, to a few remarks on THE OFFICE AND COMMISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

To us is committed "the ministry of reconciliation." We are ambassadors from the offended Sovereign of the Universe, to this world, one of its provinces which has revolted: we have tidings of mercy and terms of pardon. We are commissioned "to stand between the living and the dead," and point to the sacrifice by which the plague that rages among the

people, may be stayed. We are appointed to speak of the things of another country, to those who remember not that they are only sojourners here,—we remind man of the God he is so apt to forget,—the sins, to the guilt of which he is so apt to be insensible,—the duties, of which he would fain escape the performance,—the danger of irreligion,—the unspeakable blessings in store for the truly penitent and pious. It is our office to urge on those who have entered upon the paths of religion, to perseverance,—to comfort them by the promises of God when they are sad,—to warn them, when they are in danger of backsliding, by the doom denounced upon apostasy,—and animate them in their career and combat, by the crown which awaits them. But our grand business is, with the impenitent,—the many, the very many, still at enmity with God, to exhort them to be reconciled to Him. And, in the execution of this our commission, we must attack prejudices, most dear to the human heart,—reveal the hidden corruption which lurks there, and which men like so ill to have exposed;—we must tell many an unwelcome truth,—hold out many an awful threatening,—say much that wars with the pride of our nature. Ours is not to deal with the softnesses of language, and the terms of that timid delicacy which is afraid to shock the

feelings, and offend the vain-glory of those, among whom we minister. We find them in peril of endless woe, and slumbering on the verge of destruction ;—the voice of music in their ear, would only lull them into deeper insensibility. We must wield, as best we may, the thunder of Sinai over the sleepers, and call upon them in terms dictated by the emergency, to flee for their lives,—to make peace with the Son of God, “ ere he be angry, and they perish from the way, in the kindlings of his wrath,”—like the inhabitants of the cities of the plain, who only thought of flight when the burning shower began to descend upon their devoted heads. Surely then, if our commission compel us to say that which may sound harshly in many ears, when our motives and our duty are considered, the wrath which our plainness was about to kindle, should subside. We can tell those among whom we minister, that our work, if faithfully performed, is one of anxiety, of difficulty, of deep responsibility and much discouragement. In its discharge, we are not likely to gain worldly wealth,—to enjoy ease,—win the applause of man. We hope then, for the sympathy, for the prayers, for the kind consideration and co-operation of those to whom we are sent. We feel our weakness, that we are beset with infirmity,—as exposed to the misleadings of

passion as those around us,—as much in danger from the temptations of a world, that would make us forget our Master's service, and become assimilated to its ways. When we talk of the badness of the heart, we feel the deceit of our own;—we exalt ourselves into no superiority over our auditories,—but like them, in the prayer of penitence,—in supplication for pardon, we are ready to kneel, and say, “God be merciful to us sinners!” Such being the case, ought we to encounter the asperity of criticism,—the sneer of the scorner, who thinks himself more able to instruct, than needing instruction,—the gossip of the frivolous, and the carelessness of those to whom our most affectionate remonstrances are but as idle tales? Surely these should not be our portion; but if they are, we shall know how to bear up under it. We are ambassadors of God;—we magnify our office, while we never wish to think highly of ourselves. We are followers in the train of patriarchs, of prophets, of apostles and martyrs,—we tread in the steps of the great Preacher of righteousness and reconciliation, Jesus Christ,—and if any portion of the mantle, of the temper, of these great precursors, have descended on us,—any breathings of the Spirit which inspired them, we shall feel strong in Him that hath commissioned us, for every duty and every trial;—

we should not shrink from the stake or the scaffold, much less refrain from our high vocation, for the frowns of those who cannot harm us. "We will persevere therefore, " through good and bad report," in our work of reproof, exhortation and warning,—in the name of our Master, we will beseech men to be reconciled to God;—in all the authority of God, we will declare his message, and strive in the mildness of the Saviour, to pray, to intreat, to woo sinners, from the destructive courses which make war between them and the Omnipotent.

The day approaches which is to try *our* ministry and *your* use of it. O may we then be found faithful," and you, the happy witnesses of our faithfulness! May we who minister, be enabled, on the bed of death, to say, each for himself, " I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I am pure from the blood of all men,—I have coveted no man's silver or gold,"—kept back no truth, from fear, or from favour,—solicited no applause, courted no smiles,—preached, not myself, but my Master and his message!—And may each of you, my beloved brethren, when the gates of the earthly sanctuary shall have closed on you for ever, reap the fruits of a due improvement of the ministrations you have there partaken,—enjoy the peace of heaven, which was there proclaimed to you, -

and fully reconciled to Him who dwells on high, pass from the toils and weaknesses of mortality, to the throne of glory,—from the bed of pain, to the abode prepared for you, by paternal love, in your Father's family!

SERMON XIX.

CHRIST, THE WAY.

ST. JOHN xiv. 6. .

I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

OUR Lord was on the eve of leaving his disciples when he pronounced the words of the text:—the time was rapidly approaching when he was to return to the glorious society,—to the happy regions, from which for our sakes he had for a while estranged himself, and consented to become a sojourner among sinners; and in the world, on which lay heavily the curse of sin. The disciples were naturally anxious to learn whither their Lord was going, and to ascertain if there were any chance of their meeting again with him whom they so much honoured and loved,—for whom they had forsaken all: in the close of the last chapter, Christ assured them—the time would

come when they should follow him.—He tells them in the verses which immediately preceded the text, that he was going to his Father's house—and adds the interesting and delightful information, that he went thither to prepare abodes for them in the city of many mansions,—and that the day would arrive, when he should receive them to himself, to part no more.

The doubting and inquisitive apostle, Thomas, his ideas probably running on a temporal kingdom and earthly grandeur, supposing, perhaps, that his master spoke of going to some grand central point of resort, whence he was to return with a host competent to the establishment of universal empire,—replies, in contradiction to what he had just been told,—“Whither I go, ye know—and the way ye know”—“Lord, we know not whither thou goest—and how can we know the way?”—To which the Saviour answered, in the words before us,—“I am the way, and the truth, and the life:”—I am going to my Father, in whose house are the many mansions I told you of—do you wish to follow me? Obey my example,—use my mediation,—for no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

My brethren, we are pilgrims and strangers, sufferers and the destined prey of mortality,—aspirants after a happiness which we cannot

reach here. It is natural we should wish to find the road to safety and to blessedness,—to a home, a protector and a friend;—that we should desire to attain to truths on which the mind can repose with confidence,—which may be the guides of conduct, the grounds of hope;—it is most natural that we should anxiously look for the prospect of a life beyond the reach of disease and death:—in the short compass of our text are comprised all we want,—all we are seeking;—“I am the way, and the truth, and the life,”—henceforth let no one wander,—let no one believe a lie,—let no one sink to an eternal grave.

Let us shortly endeavour to increase our knowledge,—to confirm our faith,—to enliven our hopes,—to amend our lives by the contemplation of our Saviour as “the way, and the truth, and the life.”

The abode which, by the Fall, man left, was Paradise;—the state which he lost was one of innocence—of acceptance with God;—the glory and the beauty which sin defaced, were the lineaments which betokened God to be his Father. I say not,—for facts would not bear out the assertion,—that man has, since the first sin, been struggling to regain Paradise,—to recover innocence,—the favour of heaven,—and to retrieve the lost features of resemblance to Divinity,—but still there has

been a perpetual activity in the creation, as if to regain something it had lost;—the sighing of all nature has seemed to ascend to the heavens, as after something that earth could not impart; hence the clouds of incense that have ascended to the skies, the smoke of hecatombs and the immolation of human victims;—hence penances and pilgrimages,—costly gifts and splendid temples: but by these, men approached not nearer to God,—gained not one step upon the happiness which fled before them:—if they seemed to approach the blessedness of unfallen man,—to gain a glimpse of Eden,—the flaming cherubim scared them with their lightnings and drove them back;—there was, in fact, no way of access to it;—it might be viewed from some high moral eminence, but was seen as in the midst of a labyrinth of paths, none of which terminated in the desired spot;—the real and only way was choked up with the weeds and the thorns of man's sins and weakness,—the blissful regions were hedged up by the insulted majesty of the law;—fallen nature could not remove the obstacles which blocked up the road, and the justice of God, which stood at the gate of heaven, would not be bribed with aught that man could offer.

Such was the state of our race, when a new and a living way was made, by which man

might pass from sin to holiness,—from ruin to recovery,—from earth to heaven. There descended to our world, One, who was to show us by his example the way to Paradise,—to teach us by his doctrine how to walk therein;—he appeased the Divine justice, and the gate of heaven was left without a guard: he established a communication,—a beaten path between earth and the celestial country,—a path sprinkled with his blood,—shining with his virtues;—a way by which grace and pardon might travel to man,—by which prayer and penitence might pass to heaven; by which the sorrowing prodigal might return to the forgiving Father, who came forth to meet and to receive him;—thus might the Saviour most emphatically say to his disciples, “I am the way.”

But He is also “the truth:”—when innocence was forfeited by man, truth was rejected by him, and returned to her native heavens, and what was the consequence? Error predominated in all the opinions, and blemished the deportment of all mankind: saving where God revealed himself, the earth was soon overspread with vanity and delusion; the corruption of man hated the light, thrust truth from him, struggled even with the clearest divine revelations, and prevailed: hence falsehood pervaded the religion, the philosophy, and the

manners of society: in vain did sages travel and study, in vain did they elaborate systems;—insulted truth would not be wooed by those who had preferred darkness to light,—she scarcely ever vouchsafed a ray of her beauty, and when she did, it was only to shew how gross the ignorance and error were, with which God had visited his apostate creation. Do we look at the notions which men formed of the Divine nature,—was truth in them?—at their ideas as to the mode of acceptance with heaven,—the worship of their gods,—was error ever more prolific in folly and sin?—Do we inquire into the principles—the morals which regulated the conduct of men with each other? Retaliation, evil for evil, were permitted, inculcated by the wisest and the best of their moralists:—O, well indeed was the state of the world exemplified in Pilate's inquiry of our Lord,—"What is truth?" It was not known till He came whom Pilate delivered up to crucifixion: "truth came by Jesus Christ,"—he was the true light; in him shone the Divinity, and from him men learned an answer to the question which a celebrated sage of antiquity thought eternity would be too short to solve,—the interesting, awful question,—"What is God?"—Yes, in him truth descended to man,—truth in every form and shape of evidence;—the truth of prophecy,—

the truth of types and figures,—truth in opposition to falsehood,—to the false guides and vain confidences which had misled and deceived all who trusted to them: to him we owe the discovery of the mode of acceptance with God,—of our real characters and condition, our prospects, our destinies. In every particular does our Lord identify himself with truth: since his advent, how many an error affecting the speculations and opinions of mankind has been exploded; how vast are the discoveries which philosophy has achieved: the true vine has proved, even, to those who sought not for its more peculiar virtues, a tree of knowledge, without the curse and the bitterness of that of which man first tasted: thus is Jesus Christ the truth; to him we owe the true religion,—the true morality, the true the unfailing hope.

But he also describes himself in the text as the author, the source, and giver of life. The most terrible consequences of man's first disobedience, was the death temporal and eternal to which it doomed the sinner: the darkest shade that lowered over his fallen state, was the all-pervading gloom of a hopeless mortality: in the world, without God,—without a divine revelation,—death reigned triumphant, the grave was the termination of the most brilliant career; generation after generation sunk

into the tomb, and hope never smiled on the sepulchre, and never pointed forward to any certain and defined futurity in which the dead were to live and be happy. The philosopher and the poet, the warrior and the statesman, might indeed look to a memorial of which they would be unconscious, in the annals of the world's greatness,—but what was this? The grave triumphed over them, and even their countrymen would soon forget them,—their names would fade from the memories of posterity as fast as they became effaced on the monuments which recorded them,—and the fame, and the deeds of others would eclipse and supersede theirs.

Hence, in this dearth of hope as to futurity, the motto of most men was, to eat, drink, and be merry. The mass of mankind spent their days in toil or in debasing gratifications, living the lives either of beasts of burden, or of slaves to the senses,—and they to whom poverty, sorrow, and suffering were allotted, suffered without solace, and died without hope. The world was a prison-house, from which death led forth his victims, from which the Divine justice was perpetually snatching its prey; the human race were dead in trespasses and sins. temporal and spiritual—depravity, ravaged from pole to pole, almost without a rival or a check. Such was the state of man when a

better life was infused into his soul, than that which the Spirit of God first breathed into his nostrils; when *He* came to our earth, who is "the resurrection and the life,"—in whom dwelt essentially life and immortality, He bade death stay his arm, and no longer raise his dart against the souls and the hopes of men; he brought with him from Paradise some seeds of the tree of life, and planted them in the world, and taught its flowers and its fruits to flourish and grow on the grave. He gave his life a ransom for many, and thus communicated it to all who believe in him. There was thenceforth no death to visit the people of God, but a death unto sin; theirs became the only real and immortal life, a life unto holiness through Jesus Christ; a life of happiness commenced here,—consummated in eternity; the life which is won by walking in the appointed way, receiving the revealed truth, which consists in the favour of God in this world, in the enjoyment of his presence and fulness in the world to come.

Thus is our Lord the way, and the truth, and the life. He is all in all, in the business of man's salvation. There is no salvation in any other, there is no other name given whereby we can be saved: other ways may seem fair and pleasant in the estimation of many, but the end of them is death: other systems may as-

sume the name and the semblance of truth, but they will turn out to be fictions of the father of lies, they will deceive as to the comfort and support they promised to yield. Others than the good Physician may promise life to the sick and dying, may proffer their balm and their potions; may lay their flattering unction to the soul, but the herbs of which their medicaments are composed were not gathered in the garden of the Lord, and it is not He who alone can redeem from the power of the grave that administers them.

“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me,” such are the express words of the Saviour;—what becomes then of the hopes of the men who deny the divinity and reject the atonement of the Son of God, who thus make a mock of the catholic faith? The long-suffering God may compassionate those of them who err through imbecility of mind, but how shall *they* escape who thus unpardonably sin through perversity and pride?

“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Beware then of building on any other foundation, of seeking justification through your own merits, make not ways for yourselves when there is an appointed highway to receive not the dogmas which must be false, if God and Scripture be true. Believe in the Son of God, take him for a guide, receive the

truth which he teaches ; accept the life which he offers, tread close in his footsteps, and then, like him, you will arrive in your Father's house of many mansions.

Are there any of us who have been hitherto only conscious of walking in the ways which please ourselves?—the ways in which gain, or pleasure, or fancy may lead us? Be assured the ways of gain and of pleasure, or of human device, are not those which conduct to the Father ;—and will gains and pleasures, will the indulgence of all the heart can desire, compensate you for having missed the only road to happiness?—Are there any, who, in pride of understanding, love of speculation, and unwillingness to bind down the freedom of their minds to any creed, are roving abroad in the mazes of error, with no settled faith and defined hope? What will philosophy, what will the unhallowed exercise of intellect afford, to repay you for missing the truth, the only doctrine that can satisfy the mind and save the soul? And what life can we lead, if we refuse that which the Author and Giver of life himself offers, in the gift of his mediation and righteousness? It is fashionable to speak of life as something very different from religion but the term is grossly abused ; and they are said to enjoy it who waste its every moment, whose course is marked by idleness and dis

sipation, the frolics of the drunkard, the exploits of the pests of society, the irreverent sallies of profane wit; in contempt of their God, and injury to their fellow-creatures.—These are they alone who have the art of living,—these are they in whose steps youth and passion persuade many a one to tread.

But need it be said that he alone lives who lives to God?—he alone who lives in Christ?—that all besides are dead? Go to the cemeteries of the moral world;—who lie dead there, dead to hope, dead for ever, but they who thought they had monopolized life to themselves, they who have shortened their natural term of being on earth, and sown the seeds of the second death, which shall bring forth their hideous fruit in another state of being? Let not us then, busy ourselves either in the cares or the pleasures of the world,—immerse ourselves in business or in folly,—either error is equally remote from “the way, the truth, and the life.” How can we expect the blessings of salvation, if we seek them not in love of the Saviour, in firm faith, in imitation of him? Dare we venture into the presence of God without the mediation of his Son? Dare we offer to him a prayer in our own names? Dare we think of lying on the bed of death without the consciousness of having walked in the right way, of having believed the only truth

that will then appear so,—without having accepted the only life which the grave cannot affect? And what will become of us, if we present ourselves at last at his bar unfriended by the only mediator between God and man? O, if we go through our pilgrimage ignorant of “the way, and the truth, and the life,” what can we expect at last, but that we shall die ignorant of them as we have lived, and find the result to be wandering, delusion, and death! Let all our affections centre in Him who is the essence and the source of all we need,—we shall find happiness in the way which he enjoins to us, eternal truth will be our companion, and eternal life our reward.

On this day the Church invites us to a most close communion with this our Saviour and best friend,—she summons us to that altar on which are displayed the bread and the water of life;—to partake richly of “the Spirit, the water, and the blood.” Here meet “the way, and the truth, and the life;” here, under simple and ordinary forms, are veiled most holy mysteries—most efficient comforts; the eye of faith can here discern the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, the way unto the holy of holies, opened to the Christian through the veil of the Redeemer’s flesh, perceives the true mode of reconciliation and acceptance with God in the sacrifice and death of his Son,

the true happiness which he purchased by his humiliation and suffering, the life which he died to ensure to his people; here are the true bread which came down from heaven, the fountain which cleanses from sin, the nourishments which sustain the Christian life and strength.

What think we of this ordinance, this holy festival? Have we examined ourselves whether we have entered upon the right way,—have we embraced the truth, and tasted of the life which the Gospel offers? No man can come unto the Father, but by Christ,—no man can worship, can have communion with God, but through him; who then shall dare approach this altar who feels no interest in, no love for the Son of God,—no sense of spiritual wants, no welcome of him as all that those wants require? What good can be expected from the merely partaking the bread and wine, if the heavenly truth contained under these symbols is not acknowledged and appreciated, if new life be not the object sought? We insult the Divine Majesty, we mock all that is most sacred, we trifle with love and mercy, with grace and the Saviour's sufferings, if we draw near to his altar as matter of form. With unimpressed hearts—with no desire and firm purpose after lives becoming so solemn a profession.

Let the lovers of the way, the truth and the life come and partake of the food, which will strengthen them for the road in which they walk,—of the true manna which will give new vigour to the principles of immortality; and let them who have, till this day, wandered in wrong paths,—followed the false guides, which their tempter and their corruptions have chosen,—who have hitherto been spiritually dead while temporally alive,—let them change their path, change their conductors, clothe themselves with immortality by repairing to the Saviour, that the time may soon arrive, when the sacramental feast shall be to them a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

SERMON XX.

CIRCUMSPECTION AND WISDOM, DEMANDED
BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND BECOMING
THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS.

EPHESIANS V. 15, 16.

*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but
as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are
evil.*

WE are all 'very' ready to take the name of Christians,—to *profess* living by the rules and on the hopes of Christianity; but how seldom do we consider what is involved in the name, what is demanded of the character,—that it is a high, holy and most responsible character and name,—that they mean more than volumes can express,—and that, to act up to the requirements connected with them, would task the powers and the purity of an archangel!—Attend to the ordinary estimation and language, and a Christian is as common in this

land as the air of heaven;—look at scripture demands,—form your judgments by the standard, and according to the balance of the sanctuary, and we shall more than fear that the occurrence of a truly Christian character and deportment, is much, like angels' visits, “few and far between.”

These introductory remarks are not intended to discourage exertion, by representing the difficulty and rarity of attainment, nor to extinguish hope, by placing excellence, as it were, in the heights of heaven,—but to excite the one, and to establish the other on good grounds, *all our efforts are demanded*,—all God's grace is necessary,—we can never say we have attained,—never boast that we are perfect,—and yet we may be straining onwards to attainment, and reaching forward to perfection;—which, if we do, the day will assuredly come, when we shall grasp the prize and wear the crown,—when we shall soar above the earth on which we walk, above the clouds which bound our view, and be able to lay aside our arms, and rest from our toils, in the land of peace and of possession.

The subject before us is eminently fitted to excite to diligence, and thus to ensure our final attainment. In hope, therefore, of the fruitful blessing from on high, let us view it

as presenting us with a most important exhortation, enforced by the strongest motives.

I. It is not necessary to state what is meant by circumspection; its meaning in the text however, comprises, perhaps, more than is understood in the ordinary acceptation of the word, including the ideas of accuracy, exactness, and diligence, as well as those of care and caution. But its sense will be best brought out, by an illustration of circumstances in our situation which require it. We are in a state of probation, or trial, and it must be obvious, that all that is meant by the term circumspection, is demanded by such a state, — we are, (as will be seen,) in doubt and in difficulty, amid enemies and dangers, and our *all is at stake*, — depends on the issue.

1. *We are to walk by rule*: — circumspection is necessary, in order that we may do so. Wandering is the source of all the evil that we feel or fear. We have erred from duty and from happiness. There was a regimen prescribed us at our creation, by which, the health and peace of our souls were to be preserved; — we departed from that regimen; — we left the path in which God was our companion, — despised the food allotted by his bounty, — struck off into the way against which

we had been warned, and eat of the food that was presented by the hand of a foe. Error has, in consequence, marked our steps, and disease been introduced into our frames,—the disease of sin, the seeds of death are within us. It has pleased our merciful God, to inform us of the possibility of return,—to point out the way,—to prescribe a series of rules, by which health may be restored and happiness recovered. “I am the way,” proclaims one, whose most appropriate and dearest title is our Saviour:—repentance, faith and obedience are the guides and companions of the way. The scriptures mark out the details of the road,—tell of obstacles, dangers and foes,—where we are to avoid the pit on the one side, and the morass on the other,—and where to expect the enemy we must encounter in the midst. They caution against by-paths, in which we might be tempted to walk, as promising easier travelling and the same result,—against harbours that invite to rest and tempt to tarrying,—against fruits that look fair, but would poison,—against flowers which smile sweetly, but conceal a thorn, or a galling insect. We must not taste of every brook by the way, nor have communion with every traveller who professes to hold the same course.—Now, surely, it is most essential to be certain that we are in the right way,—(“there are ways that seem

right unto men, but the end thereof are the ways of death,")—that we understand and are acting upon the rules laid down for us. "Thus did he who is our great example," may we say to ourselves, as to every particular of the regulations assigned to us, that could apply to him. Let us look at our doings;—are we imitating him?—"Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther," says the word of God;—let us be careful, let us watch that we overstep not this limit;—whenever we doubt, let us consider, let us inquire:—had our first parents done so, —had they looked around them before they took the fatal step which expelled them and excludes us from Paradise, they would have seen that it was *a foe* that was compassing their ruin, —they would have borne in mind the strict command, and the poison had not entered their lips and contaminated their souls. We are travelling fast forward in some course or other, —we have some object in view, —let us see from God's word, that we are not on the right or left of the path of duty and of heaven, —that our object is not at variance with the directory by which we must abide. Right and wrong border on each other, —the ways of death, on the confines of life, —inclination is not to be trusted to, —appearances often deceive, —we must walk circumspectly, —we must rest circumspectly, —cir-

cumspectly we must indulge in gratification. It is only in spiritual appetites, that we may indulge to the utmost,—it is only of spiritual food that we may eat to fulness; and here, in all these particulars, we have abundant matter for *circumspection*.

2. *We must be circumspect, as those who walk under observation.* This is a most potent argument with all who have any feeling; it has a vast influence in regulating our public behaviour; and they, who heed not what criminality they are guilty of in secret, are ashamed and tremble even at the apprehension of their fellow men beholding the deformities of their souls,—the abominations of their secret practice. How circumspect is the vicious man who has any pretensions to respectability, of outward character, of regard to appearances,—how careful is he, lest the world should detect his follies and his guilt,—nay, how anxious are we, even to avoid the discovery of our *weaknesses*, by our associates and mankind in general! But, if such be our feelings and sensibilities with regard to mortals like ourselves, how tenfold more should they be affected by the consideration of our being continually subject to the inspection of that Being, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,—with whom, it is of infinite consequence, that we should stand well! Let him

frown, and what matters it, though the universe applauded?—that frown would stamp our shame and seal our ruin.

Is it nothing, that all we do, is done under the eye of the Saviour whom we profess to serve,—whom we call “Lord, Lord,”—to whom we owe more than life,—whom our sins, in some awful sense, crucify afresh?—and open to the searching glance of that Spirit, who is grieved at our shame,—perhaps, of those angelic beings, who blush for our degradation, and weep over our folly,—and possibly, of those departed friends, whose good opinion, while they were on earth, was most essential to our happiness? O, if we walk carefully and circumspectly under mortal gaze, when we have reason to suppose that, perchance, an eye of man may see us, how should we deport ourselves, believing, as we do, that, under the most responsible circumstances, we are subject to His inspection from whom we cannot flee, that, above, around, within us, are spiritual spectators! It is not outward conduct alone, that we should nicely watch, and adjust, and dress out for shew;—we are never less unseen than when in the deepest retirement,—there are beings in contact with our hearts, with our thoughts, of whom we should be more guarded, and aim more at deserving approval, under these circumstances, in our solitude.

than of acting a part on some vast amphitheatre with the world looking on. Better had we be scouted and scorned by that world, than incur the indignation of our Father in heaven;—better be the outcasts of earth, than clever and dextrous criminals, applauded by man and disowned by God!

But it is right also, and most necessary, for Christians to be very circumspect in their conduct which is submitted to man's judgment. Our example may be of weight with others,—it may lead in the paths of virtue or of vice, not a few, on whom, perhaps, we dream not of possessing any influence. It is important that we act creditably to our professions, in order to avoid the scoff, and perchance benefit the souls of the unbelieving,—in order to confirm the wavering and encourage the weak: and all this demands the utmost circumspection.

3. *Caution becomes us, as those whose all is at stake.*

Behold the man who is venturing his whole property and prospects, on some vast speculation. If he possess any prudence, you will mark his care, his anxiety, his precautions. We are candidates for eternal blessedness,—all our hopes are embarked on the sea of life, in the frail vessel of human health and strength,—we may reach our haven by care,—what care then is necessary! We are to be cautious

of every step we take in conduct, because each step we take, may decide our doom, as each may be our last;—if we err finally, we err for ever,—there is no recovery: it is well to be convinced of this,—and *why* should we *not* be convinced? Is any other notion warranted by scripture?—and if it be not, *who* will venture eternity, on possibilities and the merest speculation!

4. *We are beset by foes and dangers; circumspection is thus obviously urged on us.*

Could we see the hosts that surround us, and are warring against our peace,—were we aware of half the treachery that lurks in our own souls, we should indeed tremble, as did the Syrian host, when their eyes were opened, and they found themselves surrounded on all sides by the army of Israel. But surely, we have suffered enough by our evil propensities, by our weaknesses, by our follies,—we have fallen often enough under temptation,—have experienced conflicts, doubts and fears enough, to be aware that while here, we have nought to do with peace, with security. On what ground can we tread, where there lurks not a snare,—whither can we look, without beholding the bodies of the slain, or the memorials of defeat and ruin;—what appearances can we trust to, what trade can we make with those who will ever deceive;—how can we enter the

haunts, even of innocent pleasures, without fearing lest an ambuscade should spring upon us, and slay us, when we dream not of foe or peril? So long as we have corruptions within and temptations without,—so long as it is in the power of evil spirits, to mislead, and the world to allure us,—so long as we are in the body, and out of heaven,—we are in a state of war,—are surrounded by dangers, is circumspection the most vigilant absolutely indispensable.

5. *It is, moreover, demanded of us, in the sense of diligence and increased care, by the time we have lost, the opportunities we have missed, by the short season that remains, and the much that is to be done.*

Who is there that can look back on his time, on the time since he was capable of thinking and acting, and say, “I have done my best to devote it to God, and to employ it in the business of eternity?—Nay, how few of us can take a retrospective glance, without shuddering over some longer or shorter period of our time, devoted to folly, to trifling, to the world, or, alas! to sin?—Say, we have become wiser, we have thought better of our obligations and our interests,—we are acting far differently more consistently and wisely.—Thanks be to God if we are! But we must make amends for the past,—buy it back from the world, the

flesh and the devil,—from sloth and from pleasure, by an increasing faith in the Saviour, and a more active obedience to his commands. Thus may we retrieve our errors and redeem our losses: but this will leave no time for indolence,—will admit of no want of circumspection. Time is hastening to its grave, and opportunity to its place among the things that have gone by,—and we who mean to redeem the past, as well as improve the present, must work, as they who, at the last hour, are striving to earn the reward of those who have borne the burden and heat of the day.

II. Let us weigh now THE MOTIVES WHICH THE TEXT FURNISHES TO THE CONDUCT THAT HAS BEEN RECOMMENDED.

All that has hitherto been urged, has been of the nature of motive, but the two I mean, in conclusion, to propose, are immediately suggested by the words before us.

1. “Let us walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” If we were sometime darkness, now surely we are “light in the Lord,”—“walk as children of light.” We are ashamed of much that we have done, let us do it no more:—we have heard the voice, “awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead;”—we know our duty,—we have acknowledged and pledged ourselves to our Master,—we are

the disciples of Christ, scholars of the Bible,— votaries at the altar,—and as widely different as is the polished academic from the untaught savage, so different are our circumstances, so different should be our conduct, from the conduct and circumstances of those who own no God, who know no Saviour. They are fools who neglect eternity for time,—who say “peace, when there is no peace,”—who rush upon dangerous ground, without caution, and without arms, into an enemy’s camp,—who sport on the brink of the grave, and are careless and merry, on the confines of hell. Caution is the companion of wisdom, most especially of Christian wisdom;—diligence goes hand in hand with a wise man’s sense of the value of time and religious advantages. By our knowledge then, of our dangers and our foes, of our hopes and our causes of fear, of the witnesses of our conduct and the eternity that depends on it,—by the time we have lost and the vows we have made, let us “see that we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.”

2. The other motive of the text is, *because the days are evil.* They are evil, though persecution rages not, though heathenism rules not; they were few and evil, in the experience of the patriarch, and so will they be in the experience of us all, till the fair days of heaven arise

on our souls. Strange as it may appear, sorrow and trial, may issue in impatience and unbelief.—evil days demand watchfulness against these,—a redeeming of time, by a good use of suffering.

There will always be temptations in the examples and manners of the age in which we live,—circumspection must guard us from the snare. Evil days are coming on us all, in which we shall have no earthly pleasure,—hours of sickness and the day of death,—circumspection and diligence must prepare us to meet them, and without such preparation, the day of judgment will prove the worst of all.—We are ready enough to complain of evil days,—how many of them arise from our own faults, from our own imprudence!—might be averted or modified by care and caution!—How much of the evil that is in the world, is due to our own folly,—might be diminished by our amendment and wiser conduct! I say not that we can reform the age in which we live, but we may contribute our part to it. Sabbaths will be broken, God's name profaned, fraud and hypocrisy will abound, sensuality and sin will be too apparent: but let us see that none of these attach to us. Let our examples encourage none of such doings. Let us be watchful of our conduct, careful of our time, anxious for our souls, obedient and Christianlike;—our

part will be, done to stop the progress of iniquity, to amend the evils that abound. We may do much to wipe the worst part of the reproach of evil days from the period in which we live, by the use of circumspection and diligence,—“by redeeming the time.”

The command, remember, is positive,—“see then”—look to it,—it is at your peril if you disobey;—the command itself ought to be enough, without the motive. But it is reinforced, as we have seen, with the strongest motive,—let us shew we are reasonable creatures, by acting consequentially,—by acting upon them.

Therefore, let us not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is;—it is dictated by our best interests,—in obedience are involved our happiness and safety. Be circumspect as to what notions you take up, what doctrines you receive, what teachers you select,—in what way you occupy time,—to what you devote talents, energies and affections. So shall the time arrive, when, your probation being over, doubt and danger shall be no more, victory be won and heaven be secured, when you may take your rest and reap your reward.

SERMON XXI.

THE MESSAGE OF GOD DELIVERED TO MAN.
BY PASSING TIME.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 1.

Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.

SUCH was the declaration conveyed to Hezekiah, king of Judah, in the prime of life, in the height of power, and in the promise or enjoyment of a splendid triumph over his Assyrian foes. Such is the announcement, the moral, and meaning, and self-application of which, I pray God, we may each of us take home to our hearts this day. The present * is a season that may seem unmeet for such meditations,—it is a season of more than usual festivity and social intercourse,—when men endeavour to console themselves for the austere

* This Sermon was preached on the first Sunday in January, 1823.

and inclement aspect of external nature, by many a joyous friendly circle, and by a free participation in the exhilarations and comforts of a genial domestic and friendly atmosphere, in their sheltered homes. Why, then, mingle the chilling tidings of death with the voice of rejoicing,—why send the blood back to the young and gay heart, by an untimed, and uncalled for announcement? Why bid the raven croak and flap his wings in the halls of innocent mirth, and in the ears of the youthful and the happy?—I cannot forget that it was to a *king*, on the eve of a triumph, in the vigour of his days, and the full pressure of his well-won honours, that the message of the text was sent. I cannot forget that even in heathen Rome, when the triumphant warrior rode in procession through the crowded streets, surrounded by trophies, stunned with acclamations, and crowned with the glorious wreath, a slave in his chariot was appointed to mingle with the sounds that smote gratefully on his ears, the appalling remembrance—"Thou shalt die."—History too, tells us of the skeleton that was served up at the Egyptian feasts, and of the tomb-stone that was presented to the emperors at Constantinople, on their coronation day. And heathens and Christians uniting in this marked and solemn reminiscence, amid pomp and feasting, of human mortality, surely we

shall not be surprized at the theme, nor refuse to become acquainted, at the commencement of another year, with the fate that may be our portion, ere half that year has run its course.

I. In turning our thoughts into the channel pointed out by the record before us, let us first consider the MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET, — “Thou shalt die, and not live.” “Thus saith the Lord,” to every child of Adam, “Thou shalt surely die,” is a sentence with which we are made acquainted, so soon as we are able to reason and to think. Here is one certain point of knowledge,—one universal truth; in whatever sphere we are born,—whatever events mark our history,—to that result we are all tending,—and so familiar, and accustomed, and admitted is the truth, that the general doom produces little or no effect on the general mind and conduct. That which is best known and most surely expected, has far less influence on the thoughts and actions than many a possible and anticipated event, which may have little existence, or chance of existence, save in the imagination. But there are many occurrences in our lives, which are continually bringing this truth to our memories, and proclaiming it in our ears. The voice of God is echoed by many an event and circumstance of constant experience. What, for instance, is

the language of the year that has past? "Thou shalt die and not live,"—we may learn from its tomb, if we have not learned from its presence. The portions of time which come and go, and have each their little history, and bring with them their joys and their sorrows, their demands for exertion and their allotments of rest—the annual death of nature,—the continual sinking of day into the grave of night, are so many instructors in the one solemn lesson, "Thou shalt die, and not live."—As the leaves and the verdure of the summer that is no more,—as the many and gay tribes that spread their wings beneath its sun,—as the interests that but lately agitated, and the employments that occupied, and the pleasures that delighted us,—as the year which comprised within its courses, so much bustle and speculation,—so many different feelings,—so great a variety of doing and suffering,—as these have gone, so shall we depart, in that day when some mortal sickness comes to us, like the prophet with the message, "Thus saith the Lord, thou shalt die, and not live."

2. The decay of health is already bearing these tidings to not a few of us. They are proclaimed by every furrow on the cheek of age,—by every hair that falls, and grace that withers. The feeble step and the shattered nerve proclaim them. There are many of us,

whom the year leaves not as it found us :—it has left a legacy of added infirmities. It is the sorrowful remark of those, among whom you move, that the “earthly tabernacle” is nodding to its fall,—and it becomes a matter of fearful conjecture, that some of those with whom we have hailed the year, may live but in our kind remembrances at its close. But there are many among us, whom a consideration of this kind may not affect,—to whom it may not appear to come home. There are the young, and the vigorous, and the hopeful, who look forward to keeping mortality long at bay,—to whom, the trumpet that sounds an alarm of death, gives but a far distant voice. Every year comes to them with added graces and fresh hopes,—the frame attains a higher perfection,—the faculties expand—the prospects brighten,—life is new and fresh,—there is a long untrodden course before them, and fancy has already strewed it thick with fruits and flowers.—But the “rider on the pale horse” has many a dart even for you,—and among those whom he has trodden down, may be marked many a robust frame,—many a health-promising aspect,—many a child of hope and exultation. Leaving out of the account all the variety of diseases which may attack the young and healthful, I find that, of those who died in this metropolis, within the

last year, one sixth part fell the victims of a disease which selects the young for its prey, and delights to riot on the unwrinkled cheek,—which mars with a most premature and unnatural decay, the children of beauty and of promise;—which mocks the sufferer, and the anxious friends around, with health's own loveliest hue,—which scarcely tells of its presence till it has established its deadly empire. It is abroad almost in every blast of this northern clime, and not seldom does it choose the return from a festal scene, for its moment of attack.

3. The year that has closed, has taken from all of us friends or neighbours,—and what is the intimation conveyed to us, by these losses? It is that of the text, “Thou shalt die, and not live.”

There are family circles which no longer count among them one who gave and received the kindly wish of friendship, at the opening of the last year;—we look for those we were accustomed to see around us, and find their places vacant. The altar has lost some who but lately surrounded it,—and there are who, it is not long since, joined with us in this hallowed place, in prayer and praises, of whom we trust that they are engaged in still more delightful and exalted services. We “shall go to them,—they cannot return to us.”

4. The very services of religion, in their accustomed return; and all their variety of forms, announce to us the message of the prophet.

What gives them their emphasis and meaning?—Death. We implore preparedness and deliverance in the hour of mortality,—we are dying creatures, striving to secure to ourselves a never-dying Friend. The wants of man have driven even the most uninstructed nations to religion. Death has been their schoolmaster, to lead them to God. The attributes of the Deity have been inferred from the necessities and imperfections of man. A fine instance of this is to be found in a prayer used in their religious worship, by the heathen natives of Madagascar,—“O Thou Infinite, have mercy on us, who are but as atoms in thy creation,—Thou, who art strong, on us who are weak. Thou, who seest all things, pity us, who are in darkness. Thou Benefactor, have compassion on the needy. Thou All-powerful, undertake for us who can do nothing. Thou Eternal Being, sustain us who are changing and passing away. Thou Source of Life, be a friend to us who are hastening to death.”

II. But the message, “Thou shalt die, and not live,” is not all that is communicated to us, this day, by the word of God. The text follows up the announcement, with something

which ought to be consequent upon it,—“*Set thine house in order.*”

Death demands preparation. As the careful man discusses the business of the day, before he commits himself to sleep, so is it wise and necessary for us to arrange all our concerns, before we bid adieu to earth. There are many temporal affairs which should be in a state of fitness, so far as we can make them so, for our departure; a great part of mankind have earthly concerns of an important nature, to settle and dispose of in order that their deaths may not produce embarrassment and inconvenience to those who succeed them. They who have large commercial relations, or connections with others of any kind, are required by the exhortation before us, to keep those relations in such a train, as that the least possible confusion shall arise from the withdrawalment of their superintendence. Families are to be provided for, property to be allotted in such a way, as shall leave no doubt, and be matter of no dispute among children and heirs. But even in these temporal matters, we are met by the generally prevailing unwillingness of men to do any thing that seems to imply an idea of dissolution. The arrangements alluded to, seem to be looked upon with a kind of superstitious dread, as if they hastened the event which they contemplated;—and many a one

• will run the hazard of injustice and strife, and
• inextricable perplexity, arising from his death,
to all concerned in his affairs, rather than make
the needful dispositions which ought to be
made, and might, in a greater number of cases,
be made in full health, and the possession of
• sound and undisturbed mind.

But this is not the prime and indispensable
branch of preparation for death. There is
another "house" to be "set in order,"—the
interior mansion—the concerns of the im-
mortal soul. I need not speak of its unfitness
for death,—of its natural state of disorder, —
that it is the seat of bad passions, where the
love of the world takes the place of the love of
God,—where sin has a sad ascendancy, and
judgment a strong claim. Death is a distin-
guished visitor,—the effects of his arrival will
be according to our fitness or unfitness for the
• event: if he find the chambers of the soul
"swept and garnished," his visit will be a
friendly one, and the Judge who follows close
upon him, will issue the command which will
secure us from death's power to hurt, and
redeem us from his icy bondage, and breathe
into us the breath of immortal being. But
how are we to set our souls in order for his ap-
proach?—We must take measures that he do
not surprise us,—we must, by our prepara-
tion, go forth to meet him—Christian faith

must conduct us to Him “who is the resurrection and the life”—to him who can reform *us* in his own image—who can bid “old things pass away and all things become new”—we must cling to him who is our atoning sacrifice, through whom our God is pleased to “receive us graciously, and love us freely.” Christian repentance must lead us to that godly sorrow which needeth not to be repented of—we must lament the disorder which sin has occasioned in our natures,—must amend our lives,—serve our God, and be in charity with man. And Christian obedience must testify that our faith is real, that our repentance is sincere;—our lives must be changed, if the grace of God have changed our hearts—it is not a partial, but an entire arrangement and re-modelling, that must take place in our characters—it will not do to repress one vice and indulge in another—to beautify one room of the mansion while the rest remains in confusion and disarray—the chamber must be garnished with Christian principles—the outward man must be adorned with the pervading beauties and admirable consistency of Christian deportment.

What is the state of *our* hearts and affections? Is there not much impurity, many evil propensities within? To whom is the temple of our souls dedicated? To what Deity

do we offer the incense of our love and service?
• Is it to an earthly object that we give our love—is it to the world, and the pleasures, and the pursuits of time, on which there is no stamp of Deity,—in which there is no view to His glory, no studied conformity to His requirements? is it this we cultivate and delight in? What is our estimate of time and eternity? what, our comparative care of soul and body? —Are we making ourselves familiar with, and laying up store for that state of being which is to come? How is conscience situated? When it speaks, does it tell us that we are at peace with God—that we are in a fair and likely way of happiness,—does it promise a stingless death, and a grave, from which the victory has been borne away?—Thou, to whom the Sabbath is no delight,—to whom the Scriptures are no subjects of meditation, and delightful familiarity—thou, to whom prayer is a stranger, and secret devotion an unknown guest in thy retirement—whose sins are unsorrowed over, and unforsaken,—whose every day adds to the catalogue of those, in which thou hast forgotten thy God, and lived as if He had not revealed Himself, had not given precepts and commandments—as if Christ had not died, and the Spirit had not been offered—how is *thine* house in order? “Thou shalt die, and not live.”—Canst thou,—darest thou

die thus? Thou, who profanest the name of thy God, and the institutions of religion,—who canst scarcely hear a command, which thou hast not openly and plainly, shamelessly and palpably broken,—who hast no likeness to the Saviour's image,—hast taken no step towards “the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,”—who art almost a stranger to the sanctuary, and a total stranger to the hallowed truths of the faith,—how will death find thee?—is thine house in order? Professor of Christianity, partaker of its festivals, and constant at its observances,—of fair outward character,—in whom there is every thing for man to applaud,—art thou acting up to thine advantages—art thou bringing forth fruit, in correspondence to the cultivation thou hast received?—Art thou sufficiently impressed with the Saviour's love, sufficiently hostile to sin, and on thy guard against the appearance of evil? Is thy faith strong and productive? Art thou on the advance towards perfection—dost thou act suitably to thy knowledge?—A pilgrim and a stranger here, art thou holding away from vanities, and placing thine affections where is thy treasure, and looking, and longing for “the city that hath foundations?”—Is time viewed in its full and awful connection with eternity?—Art thou such as thy faith demands that thou shouldst be? Re-

member, God is to try thee, not man,—death to put thee to the test,—the furnace of affliction to prove thee,—and if thou art not found far better, in principle and in action, than the moral and prudent man of the world, confusion and ruin will overspread all thine affairs and hopes. Remember, too, that Hezekiah, godly as he was, had somewhat left undone, even at death. “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.” I cannot deliver the message of death to any individual, as the prophet did to him. It cannot be known to any of us, whose places in this temple will be vacant, ere the close of this year,—but the exhortation may be applied to all, because the doom hangs over all. A mortal sickness and a bed of death are no convenient seasons for arranging the affairs of eternity;—we must subsist, then, on the stock we have laid up,—on the faith, on the hopes we have been all our lives preparing, for the grand trial;—we must not calculate on doing any thing at death—a hasty summons may not admit of it,—destroyed faculties may render preparation impossible;—it is not a time to turn the unaccustomed thoughts on the soul, on God, and religion, when the mind is distracted,—when the actions can bear no testimony of our sincerity,—when the minister of religion, summoned to close the scene, dare not speak of

hope, because he can augur nothing from feelings and professions, extorted by nature's extremity.

The subject of our reflections has been a gloomy one,—but it is better fitted than any I know, to lead us to God,—to make us acquainted with ourselves.—We have only to raise our eyes to the heavens, and the clouds disperse; and the star of Christian hope arising in Bethlehem, the brightest and best of the morning's sons, shines brightly in our horizon. We have but to follow its leadings, and we shall find ourselves presenting our wants and our sorrows to the Saviour, who can supply the one, and alleviate the other,—who can make us his own by adoption and grace,—who can take away our guilt, and animate us with his Spirit. He will teach and enable us to set our souls in order, for his coming to judge the world.—But where, it may be asked, are the vaunted hopes of religion?—They did not nerve and sustain the good king Hezekiah. He wept and bemoaned himself, when the prophet announced his death: he lamented sorely, that on him, the sun would shine no more, nor earth display her sweets to him,—nor man impart the cheering blessings of society. There might be,—there were, temporal reasons which rendered death, rather an unwelcome visitant to the pious monarch. Besides, the Gospel

had not spoken to him, in its clear and delightful language, of the world to come. But laying all this aside,—to the best, and most privileged, death is, after all, a matter of anxiety and aversion. “Truly the light is sweet,” and we are bound by many, I shall not say weaknesses, but many an allowable and endearing tie to the world and its inhabitants. It is hard to be cut off, as Hezekiah was likely to be, in the midst of days, without any process of lingering sickness, and the weariness and indifference to the world, which experience and old age may give, to diminish the surprise and regret of the awful separation from all beneath the sun. I look not for triumphs, and a daring courage, when the last enemy is dealing with me.—We have duties in life to discharge, and we should weary of the world, and be unfit for the discharge of those duties, could we enter into a perception of the bliss that is awaiting the sincere believer;—could we hear the music of heaven, we should be like the Swiss soldier, when he hears the favourite air of his own far-off land;—did strong traces of our lost inheritance remain on our minds, we should be impatient to recover it. A beautiful writer relates a circumstance which will explain this idea. — He relates, that returning from India to his native country France, the seamen, who had been absent for some years, the moment they

caught a glimpse of the shore, became incapable of their duties, and absorbed and entranced with their approaching happiness, as they drew nearer, the powers of the charm increased—they gazed with a rapture that cannot be expressed upon the rocks and sea-weed on the shore, and thought them far lovelier than the gorgeous shells which strewed the Eastern shores, and the glorious herbage of the sunny land they had left :—there was music in every village bell ; and when, having entered the port, they heard their names called by well-known and kindred voices, the joy seemed to exceed the endurance of frail humanity. Just so must we be fond of life, that we may endure our banishment on the inhospitable shores of this world,—but, could we see the inheritance promised the Christian,—comprehend and be sensible of half the love, wherewith our Redeemer loves us,—could we hear the voices of the departed telling of their glory and their joy, and inviting us to “come up thither,”—impatience and eagerness would antedate our doom, before our souls were well ordered and fitted for those heavenly abodes, and that glorious society. Our duty is clear before us :—though our hopes may not soar so high as to satisfy the enthusiast.—“ Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.” Death will arrive soon

enough for our interests. In the mean time shall we be deaf to the exhortation of God, and refuse to hear when he speaks? Has the year that is gone no warning voice? Have the infirmities of nature, and the death of those with whom we have held converse,—have the services of religion—have the ravages of premature disease, no weight and meaning?

In the high and joyous state of health, as well as in the threatenings of disease, let us set our house in order, that when the Lord shall come, we may have a temple for his reception,—an account ready for his inspection, and garments white and clean for the banquet of eternity!

SERMON XXII.

THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN
JOY.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice.

THIS appears, at first sight, a new and somewhat strange precept:—joy (we are ready to say) cannot be commanded to become a guest of the human soul, but must spring, unprompted, from some adequate source of felicity. And yet it is a precept of the apostle, “rejoice alway, rejoice evermore.”

Besides, it is to caution, to solemnity of feeling, and gravity of deportment, that the precepts of the Saviour and his apostles generally exhort us; the voice of the Gospel is, “repent ye,”—a blessing is pronounced on those “that mourn,”—religion seems to place us in circumstances of difficulty and anxiety, in

this our pilgrimage of life, and to hold forth joy as a fruit we are to pluck from the tree of immortality, when, having passed safely and triumphantly the gulf of death, we find ourselves arrived on the shores of life everlasting. Joy seems a portion which our Lord abandons to the world, when he says to the disciples,—“the world shall *rejoice*, but *ye* shall lament.” Still, however, St. Paul calls upon Christians to rejoice. Thrice does he repeat the exhortation in the course of this epistle, and in our text, with an emphasis and an urgency admirably calculated to arrest and fix the attention. Backed by such an authority, the ministers of religion may address the same exhortation to those among whom they labour; the church commissions, the Saviour commands them to do so; the summons was for many weeks,* to repentance and self-abasement,—we were called upon to contemplate the enormity of sin, and to mourn on account of its prevalence in our own hearts and lives,—ceasing to do evil, we were enjoined “to do well,” and the crucified Lord of glory, was at length held up to our view, to give poignancy to our sorrow, and add deadly hatred to our resolutions against sin. But from the attitude of mourning around the cross, and at the sepulchre, the

* During Lent.

infant Church was ere long awakened to wonder and to hope, by the message, "He is risen,"—by the re-appearance of the risen Lord, by his continued kindness, full instructions, and glorious promises. The first disciples saw him ascend to heaven in triumph; and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, permanent joy and peace took up an abode in their souls, in the train of the Spirit, the comforter. And if *our* religion be worth any thing, for *us* the Saviour has died, for *us* he has risen, to us he has appeared in glory; the Holy Spirit has come down upon us, the power and presence of the Most High overshadow us,—mansions in heaven are preparing for us,—sorrow and sin are being left behind us in our course, and we are making rapid advances to a state of permanence, safety, and felicity, which is too glorious for the mind to conceive, or the tongue to describe. And well may the voice of gladness be heard in the dwellings of the righteous,—well may the apostle reiterate the injunction, "rejoice in the Lord alway." The heart of every one who has embraced the offers, and tasted any of the blessedness of Christianity, must respond, "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Let us now briefly occupy ourselves with an inquiry into THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF

CHRISTIAN JOY. We shall see enough to admire its reasonableness, its fulness, and its stability.

1. Joy is defined by one of our greatest philosophers, to be “a delight of mind arising from a consideration of present, or assurance of approaching good.”—It is not gaiety, merriment, or festivity,—has no kindred with the boisterous mirth of the thoughtless and dissipated, or the laughter of the fool. “True joy is not” says South, “that trivial, vanishing, superficial thing; that only gilds the apprehension and plays upon the surface of the soul; it is a calm and gently animating feeling, arising from a sense of happiness, and that is the result of virtue and innocence.”

This joy dwelt in, and pervaded, in its utmost earthly perfection, the souls of the first parents of our race, before sin, the bane of joy and the blight of innocence, expelled it from their bosoms. No wonder that it dwelt with them, the companion of their primal purity, for, to use the language of an eloquent preacher of our own day, “their birth-star was the smile of their Maker’s countenance, their birth-song was the chorus of the angelic host, their birth-right was a free and glorious creation, decked with magnificence and beauty by the lavish hand of the Omnipotent.”—But

when their God estranged himself from them, —when Paradise, at the touch of guilt, passed away like a dream, and they were left to mourn over the wrecks of their glorious inheritance, and doomed to wander, long and wearily through the pilgrimage and probation of life—the joyous mental frame of their original happy state forsook them too, and only returned occasionally to become a guest in their souls, during their future earthly course, promising a full revival, only when Paradise should be regained.

The joy to which we are called, is similar to that which still cheered the fallen estate of our first parents; it is founded on the same principles, and certainly is not inferior in its delights and fulness:—it is the joy of recovered innocence and renewed hope,—arises from a consciousness of God's restored favour and good offices.

II. But this leads us to consider THE SOURCE of Christian joy, from a view of which, we shall be able more fully to learn its nature. And it has its source, in the first place, *in the forgiveness of sins*. This is the first step to a recovery of original righteousness. If we have rightly passed the weeks of penitence, we must be conscious, in some degree, of the blessing of pardon. To sincere repentance, that can

never fail to be accorded,—and in proportion to our sense of pardon, must be our sense of safety, must be our Christian hopes; in proportion as we are forgiven, have we struck at the root of all our sorrows and fears, by getting rid of the guilt of sin; it is guilt that presses down the heart,—it is an accusing conscience with which gladness cannot dwell: the curse of God has gone forth against sin, his frown hangs heavily on the sinner,—the materials of joy are wanting, the causes of grief are present and abound; and to say to one so circumstanced, “rejoice in the Lord,” would be adding mockery to wretchedness, by requiring that which is impossible.

It is a misfortune to man, and a consequence of his corruption, that he is not sufficiently conscious of the enormity of sin,—that he views not, in its true light, the violation of God’s laws. It is this that causes many a one to perish in his rebellion, that prevents many from putting up the prayer of penitence, and receiving the grace, and appreciating the bliss of pardon. There is probably no one among those whom I address, that has been guilty of any of the higher crimes against his fellow-men, to which the laws of society and the judgments of mankind have attached a peculiar and oppressing weight of guilt; but perhaps, it has fallen to the lot of not a few, to ima-

gine themselves, in some distempered dream, labouring under similar pressure of crime. I need not recal to the memory of such, the keen anguish they experienced;—how they would have given worlds for innocence—that every joy and hope withered under the blight of their guilt, and death itself would have been welcome, because it seemed to promise something like remission and repose; nor need I dwell on the sense of bliss that visited the soul, when the eyes of the mind were opened, and it beheld itself stainless of the imagined crime: slowly and suspiciously did it admit the delightful idea; but when assured that all was reality, a joy was the result, momentary it may be, but such a joy as earth and all her sources of pleasure never imparted; clearly proving that a feeling of innocence is man's best happiness, is the source of his most sufficient joy.

It falls not within our purpose, to dwell, now, on the enormity of every sin against our Creator and benefactor,—to say how it is fraught with ingratitude,—how it is in spite of mercy,—how each single offence demanded, in order to its pardon, the humiliation and death of the Son of God. With such guilt, we are all stained; and it is *no dream*,—it is a waking and admitted reality. And if we were alive to the whole truth,—if we could look on

ourselves and see what we are in the estimation of infinite purity, each moment of waking existence would be as intolerable as was the pressure of our dreaming criminality, and we should know neither joy nor peace, till we became assured that the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed us from all our sins.—Of their heinousness, it is presumed, we are not altogether insensible; (and we shall do well to study the scriptures and the character of God, and the circumstances of man, in order that we may be more sensible of it) and we are conscious, if we have availed ourselves of our Christian privileges, that what is past and has been repented of, is forgiven.—Christian joy ought therefore to be our portion,—our souls should respond to the exhortation of the apostle,—“rejoice in the Lord alway.” We have read and appropriated to ourselves the delightful assurance,—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins,”—and we are ready to add the triumphant anthem that follows,—“Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath had mercy upon us, our God hath abundantly pardoned us.”

2. *The promise of God's gracious aid to keep us, in future, from sin, is another source of Chris-*

tian joy. Without this, our lives would be a continual course of sinning and repenting, of resolved amendment and miserable short-coming. But He who pardons the penitent that implores forgiveness, will give him that firmness which will enable him to resist temptation, and gradually impart that new nature, to which sin shall become odious and unnatural. His grace will preserve us from sin's contamination, as his providence protects us from the ordinary dangers and temporal calamities that beset the path of life. We cannot be assured that we shall sin *no more*, but we have it in our power to attain so much of perfection that we shall sin through weakness and not with willingness,—that infirmity may fail in the discharge of duty, but rebellion will never again hoist its standard.

3. *An assurance also of final triumph over all our foes*, cannot fail of being an additional reason for the joy which Christianity requires in her disciples.

At best, we are here in a state of warfare and anxiety, and misgiving will, not seldom, dispute our title to rejoice: but we look forward to the end of our course, and that is radiant with hope, and glorious in its promise of triumph. There is a time coming when the last act of forgiveness shall do away our last sin and our last short-coming,—when the Sa-

viour's perfect obedience, imputed to us, shall furnish us forth for death and judgment, decked with more than original perfection ;—when corruption perishing within us, and Satan withdrawing his defeated hosts, and the world ceasing to be a spare, the body a drawback and a burden, the soul, on the eve of emancipation, shall drink the first full draught of the joys that are for evermore.

4. But we hasten to other ingredients in the Christian cup of joyfulness.

The Church still encourages us to dwell on the delightful idea of the risen Saviour,—and cold is the heart, and uninterested in the Christian hope, which delights not to linger near the sepulchre and listen to the tidings, “ He is risen,” and look into the first tenantless grave which attested that the empire of death was destroyed. We cannot but delight to press around Him, and while we contemplate, in his pierced hands and side, the sufferings which purchased our pardon,—exult in his fulfilled word, that he would raise in three days the temple which sin destroyed,—see, in his re-animation, our complete redemption, and receive a pledge that these *our* mortal and unstedfast temples, though death must lay them in ruins, shall, animated by the Spirit of God, and called into a new being by the voice of the Saviour, arise in the beauty and with the sta-

bility of heavenly architecture. We cannot but pause and rejoice over this our hope; children of the dust, whose days are as an hand-breadth, victims of countless mortal diseases, who cannot reckon on a day, nor an hour,—and yet warmly attached to life, anxious after immortal being—we cannot but listen to the promise of life eternal, we cannot but dwell on the tidings and proofs of our revival from death. And when we raise our eyes to the heavens, from the grave, we behold the inheritance in store for the blessed, an inheritance of glory and happiness, that is indefinite and inconceivable, and therefore suited to the boundless desires of the soul; and full of that mysteriousness which has so much of a charm for our inquiring minds,—we wonder not that we are called to joy,—if the Christian hope be ours, we have cause to wonder that we should ever sorrow, ever doubt, ever fear. We may well be called to “rejoice in the Lord,” because, in the Lord Jesus, we find provision for all our wants, pardon for all our sins, and a purchased heaven for our reward.

There are many causes of religious joy which time permits not that we enumerate: such as the joy that must result from communion with God, from the possession of his revealed will, from the indwelling of his Spirit; and we have many a temporal joy which would also deserve

to be mentioned,—the possession or recovery of health, the enjoyment of life's comforts. It is matter of joy, that we have arrived at the close of a winter* remarkable for its cheerlessness and severity, and fertile in the ravages of disease and death,—that spring is opening upon us, and that nature is becoming profuse of her sweets and of her plenty. Religion, it is true, calls us to rejoice chiefly on spiritual grounds, but, building our happiness firmly on this, there is much in time, and much on earth, that coming with God's blessing, and viewed as marks of his love, may furnish legitimate reason for joyfulness. This will enhance the best, and give dignity and meaning to the most inconsiderable of nature's gifts; and the meanest floweret of the vale, and the carolling of the birds, as well as the view of the glorious landscape, or the brilliant sky, or the proud and wealthy metropolis, — will send a thrill of pleasure through the soul of him who has tasted the joys of religion, such as is never experienced by the man destitute of her subjects of gratulation and hope.

And what now is worldly joy?—what is the joy which a man may have without religion? Take a view of his course—he is on a journey, at the end of which is a frightful and un-

fathomed gulf—he *must* press forward, he cannot pause nor go back;—he may comfort himself because he occasionally meets with objects that amuse and delight him,—he may gaze on splendid scenery, and taste of the flowing stream, and pluck the fruits as he passes, but he cannot rest;—the gulf is before him, and necessity impels him to advance;—he may take with him some flowers, but they fade in his hands,—some fruits, but they disappoint or pall upon his taste,—and as he goes on, the scene becomes less brilliant and inviting, the gardens become less fruitful, the flowers, less sweet and beautiful, the fields less smiling, the waters less clear and refreshing,—he feels that he is bordering on the shadow of death, and shivers in the coldness of approaching mortality;—his feet “stumble on the dark mountains”—he cannot retreat, he must not return—he sinks in hopelessness and death. And I have left out of account, the miseries of a life without God,—the miseries incident to flesh,—the superadded miseries of guilt; and I fear to look into the world in which, shall be rendered to every one according to the deeds done in the body! What are the pleasures of sin?—the tyrant has them,—the man of dissipation has them,—the revengeful, the covetous, the proud have them. No one, surely, will envy *these*. But what are the pleasures of the

merely worldly?—of persons, who, without committing gross and evident sin, are yet living without God, without the hopes of religion? The joys of such may be showy and plausible, but they will not bear examination; look at their foundation,—it is the sand of this perishing world;—look at their tenure,—it is the caprice of fortune,—it is, at best, the slender thread of health and life;—look at their materials,—folly and vanity are indelibly stamped on them, and on the best and choicest, insufficiency and unsatisfactoriness. It is a mournful view, the contemplation of that man's happiness, who has embarked his all on the stream of time;—the vessel may spread its sails to the breeze,—may shew resplendently in all the pomp of streamer and of pennon, but the storm is at hand, and the anchor of faith is wanting, and the port of heaven is far away.

Let us again refresh ourselves, and stimulate our value for religion, by a parting glance at the Christian joy. It is permanent, it is increasing, it is pure, it is ennobling; associated with it are no aching heart, nor reproaching conscience. It is in itself sufficient,—it can do without, it can supply the place of all other joys,—it can triumph over every misery to which mortals are subject. It tells of suffering, and disappointment and pain, that they are the visitations of a Father's hand, to draw

more closely the cords of union between the believer and his God. Where the uninitiated observer sees nought but gloom, the light of heaven is dawning,—Christian joy can dwell with pain, though it will not hold companionship with sin;—it can exist in the soul, when nature is mourning the loss of a best and dearest friend;—it can speak of happiness and give a lightsome heart when “the mourners are going about the streets;”—can look into the grave, as a place to which the object of affection is committed, but in trust for immortality. And it will perform the same friendly office, when death comes to ourselves;—we need but it, and our dying chamber will present a more cheerful scene than any festive hall, and our sun-setting will be lovely and calm and promising. The resources of Christianity are such that we have no need, like the Epicurean, to aim at banishing pain and misgiving by a ceaseless round of pleasures, nor to affect, like the Stoic, to rise superior to suffering.—Religion can afford to look suffering and death in the face, and then to tread them under foot as conquered foes.

After all, this is but a defective picture,—such as it is, however, *who* will not love it?—*who* will not long for such a joy?—Talk of gloom and moroseness as the portion of the religious!—Who are the happy, who are wise

but they? Is there not something here far beyond the plenteous banquet and the midnight revel—far beyond the best and most unsullied joys that earth has to give?—there is the fulness that man wants, there is the permanency which God only can impart.

It is our duty then, it is our privilege to rejoice. Joy and content and hope must be leading features of our souls, if religion be ours: it is our own fault if we have cause for habitual complaint and melancholy. God calls us to joy, and he gives us the materials for rejoicing. It is urged upon us as a test of our faith, as a mark of our gratitude;—and taking a review of what has passed under our consideration,—repairing to the mine of the Scriptures, the storehouse of God's promises,—the glories and the pleasures which are evident to the eye of Christian faith, we may and ought to take up the exhortation of our text, and apply it to our own cases,—“rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice.”

. THE END.

